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The Position of the Child in Irish Literature

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**Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the
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ABSTRACT

The thesis is fundamentally an interrogation of what is called the 'position of the child' vis-à-vis the 'position of the father'. The concept of the child as defined by age, knowledge, experience, or innocence is dismissed. The concept of position is drawn from Lacan's Schema L and Schema R which map out relations between the registers of the Symbolic, Imaginary and Real. Schema L is used to define the position of the child, or the subject who is both defined and excluded from a relation, and also what is called the position-as-child in a father-occluded Imaginary, produced from a culture with phallic *jouissance* as its dominant mode of pleasure and pain. The logic of such a culture is of the phallic exception.

Schema R is skewed in Figure 3 to sketch a model of 'phallic mobility' and 'feminine mobility' between the father and child positions, as well as a Law of the Father and a Law of Desire. Foucault's analysis of Western sexuality from the eighteenth century onwards is proffered as the historical basis for the Law of the Father, when the parent-child relation becomes preponderant as *the* socialisation process.

Around this period, literature develops a notably half-articulated (Imaginary) relation between writer and reader in Sentimental and Romantic discourse, and the position-as-child becomes a staple of aesthetic as well as regulatory, political interest. The military and structural violence of colonialism forcibly imposes an *English* 'position-as-child' on a native populace. The colonial ideology comprising a half-articulated, nostalgic, analeptic and Imaginary framing of both native culture and the child is considered a means for overdetermining a proleptic path the native and child then must follow towards a colonial and patriarchal position of the father.

The glaring (phallic) exception to half-articulation is Romantic Hamlet. Dispossessed of land and title, incredibly articulate yet politically inept, Hamlet falls every time in Act 5 just like MacPherson's ideal for the Celt in *Ossian* (1765). How the reception of *Hamlet* in Romanticism peculiarly ignores the question of land, and how Hamlet invites a neighbouring, Nordic nation to establish a government is, at a period of colonial expansion, eminently gratuitous. Hamlet is the idealised position-as-child in a historically situated, colonial-inspired, father-occluded Imaginary. The main body of the thesis then proceeds by

chapters on authors and the voices of characters reaching for a hearing in a father-occluded Imaginary.

In Chapter 1, I first consider two tales by William Carleton set side-by-side in *Traits and Stories of the Irish Peasantry*. The tales occur before the Famine and focus on two father-son pairs, and I argue the frame of authoritative relations between father and son are representative of two divergent political attitudes current in the land. The third tale, written in 1861 and set in Dublin city, describes a traumatic search by a boy for a good father in what is, I argue, a parable of the Famine, its causes, and aftermath. A middle-class gentleman becomes a *femme fatale* over a Dublin underclass.

Chapter 2 is another tripartite chapter first of all examining May Laffan's satirical novel, *Hogan M.P.* (1876). Laffan outlines the semiotic exchange of the position-as-child as stylizing the scene of middle-class seduction. The short story, *The Game Hen*, illustrates how the infant functions as a mediator of the private-public divide for women in a crowded Dublin slum. As such, the infant, for an irremediably short time, represents an impoverished woman's only measure of incontestable wealth. In *Flitters, Tatters and the Counsellor*, three Dublin street 'arabs' have uninhibited access among themselves to father and child positions, providing them an enviable and culturally barred *jouissance*. Desire and *jouissance* are curtailed for children, especially in acting - the cult of childhood's naturalism takes over. A prescribed vanishing of the position of the child takes place in romance, the fetish of the voiceless infant, and industrial schooling. This vanishing is the ideologically demanded *aphanasis* of the subject of desire in a father-occluded Imaginary.

Just such a disappearance is politically staged by Yeats in *The Land of Heart's Desire*, the centrepiece of Chapter 3. The voice and desire of 'The Child' cannot be corralled between the pragmatic and Miltonic voices of a strong farmer and Catholic priest.

In Chapter 4, the work of Beckett is considered as exemplary of a metonymic discourse neither inhibited by the nothingness of the signifier nor the Oedipal copyright of the Law of the Father matching proper voices to proper places in a text.

The elaboration in Chapter 5 of what are key themes - the nationalized womb, how only the fertile are Real, and romance and the position-as-child - are invoked together for a discussion of the 'politics of lovelessness' in Edna O'Brien's *Country Girls Trilogy*. The well-noted uncertainties in the work Brian Friel are considered next in Chapter Six,

uncertainties arising from a profound lawlessness linked to a loss of gesture and responsibility, both to the self and others, all this for the sake of protecting what is in the post-colonial context, the fragile position of the native father. The fragile father-son relation is bound over to complacency, seriality and stereotyping.

Forms of serial lovelessness and lawlessness are considered in Chapters 5 and 6 as the utmost of the post-colonial condition.

The final chapter discusses ways in which the plays of Marina Carr transgress the division of public and private and the burden of fertility assigned to women. Carr's female protagonists tirade men and wield a taste for both pleasure and trauma without resorting to victim status. If Beckett evacuated the position-as-child of its potency as a prop for the writer-father, Carr renounces the position-as-child as a shelter for either women or children, and instead, assigns responsibility to all, bar none.

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Finally, I would like to thank the AHRC for the scholarship funding which enabled this thesis to begin in the first place.

References and Abbreviations

References to Milton's work are from *The Norton Anthology of English Literature, Sixth Edition, Volume 1*. Edited by M.H. Abrams et al. London: Norton.

References to Shakespeare are from *The Oxford Shakespeare: The Complete Works*. Edited by S. Wells and G. Taylor. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

T *Molloy; Malone Dies; The Unnameable*. London: Calder, 1994.

Introduction

So well she acted, all and every part
By turns - with that vivacious versatility,
Which many people take for want of heart.
They err - 'tis merely what is called mobility,
A thing of temperament and not of art,
Though seeming so, from its supposed facility;
And false - though true; for surely they're sincerest,
Who are acted strongly on by what is nearest.
(Byron, *Don Juan*, Canto XVI, xcvi)

The thesis begins *in media res* as for any structural argument. The Appendix describes a model adapted from Lacan's Schemas L and R for the position of the child, the position of the father, and the position-as-child. The position of the child has nothing to do with age, innocence or experience - there is nothing of nature, flesh or essence in its description. As Jacqueline Rose writes,

there is no child behind the category 'children's fiction', other than the one which the category itself sets in place, the one which it needs to believe is there for its own purposes. These purposes are often perverse and mostly dishonest, not wilfully, but of necessity. (Rose 1993: 10)

The constructed category of the position-as-child is adjunct to the position of the father, and the thesis discusses such perverse and dishonest, patriarchal and colonial necessities 'naturalised' in a position supplementing the 'uniperversity' of a patriarchal and colonial position of the father, whereby all development or progress is oriented towards its proleptic attainment and accomplishment. If the central concept of Irish studies, including post-colonialism, is the nation, I study the nation as it has been positioned as a child, and contested over.¹

The three other most important elements of the model include the father-occluded Imaginary, the Law of the Father, and the Law of Desire. The first describes patriarchy, and with literature in mind, the second and third have Hamlet and the *femme fatale* as their

¹ Richard Haslam's essay, 'A Race Bashed in the Face': *Imagining Ireland as a Damaged Child* (1999), considers the 'classical' viewpoint of the Irish as child-like. Haslam's title beckoning to the flesh of a face situates the already Imaginary beginning of the discussion, and a physically violent, Law of the Father. All this is true, but may be problematic. Haslam does take care to note how the personification of Ireland may be a manifestation of the pathos labelled "postcolonial melancholy" by Francis Mulhern, a melancholic Trap with the nation still situated in a father-occluded Imaginary. (Haslam 1995: 32) Melancholy is an expression of lawlessness as the loss of the signifier.

prime symbolic examples.² One crucial point is how "the *femme fatale* and the obscene-knowing father cannot appear simultaneously within the same narrative space" (Zizek cited Charnes 2006: 33) While the *femme fatale* uncovers the signifier which speaks with the question of desire (or the Other the primordial father disallows), the non-speaking primordial father sees all as his own flesh, everywhere, with his own name franked on this flesh. The primordial father who does not speak or read but franks, is at the limit of the position of the father, and the *femme fatale* an uncertain, unknowable but definite threat to this position - the *femme fatale* need neither be female. The primordial father's repressing or constraining language represses the basis of sexuality (the Symbolic is the seat of sexuality), and mitigates an imposition and reconstruction of the Symbolic, gender and sexuality, along lines of Imaginary difference (such as by race and age), in a father-occluded Imaginary.

In Ireland in the early nineteenth century,

the role of the state expanded and became a major source of employment, of social mobility, and of favours. But the whole state apparatus was an agent of anglicisation. The more interventionist the state became, often in an effort to respond to nationalist 'grievances', the more pervasive became the pressure for anglicisation... The history of language shift in Ireland, therefore, is intimately bound up with political history. If Ireland had not come under English political control, even the closest economic contact need not have led to the loss of the language.
(Lee 1989: 666)

Forms of social mobility dominated by anglicisation were thus increasingly able to structure desire. Mobility itself along with political recognition was increasingly mapped onto positions of the father and child in the *English language and its Imaginary*.

Mobility between the positions of the father and child is the latitudinous concept of the thesis (*jouissance* has little to do with life and death, or male and female, but much to do with mobility between them). The relation between the position of the child and the position of the father is drawn in Figure 3 so as to suggest that the resistance between them may be other than dialectical, as for the phallus. (Lacan 1999c: 152) Instead of recognition of a personality being grounded in a dialectical resolution of the father *or* child positions, there might be recognition from mobility itself, mobility between the father *and* child positions, such as Phelim in Carleton's story *Phelim O'Toole's Courtship*, or more painfully because so private, in Beckett's work. The unique way a person *moves* between the two

² Connections such as this have recently been discussed by Linda Charnes in *Hamlet's Heirs* (2006), where Hamlet is labelled "the first *noir* revenger". (Charnes 2006: 31)

positions could be as much as basis for recognition as the manner a person *settles* between the two positions.

Mobility is what drives *jouissance* - when I refer to *jouissance* it is of either sort, feminine or phallic - and mobility traverses the Real, where the truth of the subject resides in the gaps of signification. A lack of mobility between the positions of the father and child brakes enunciation and checks the imagination. In Ireland, and elsewhere, "The laws of the state are specifically designed to outlaw nomadism, even going so far as to turn it into a criminal offence."³ Fundamentally, a lack of mobility suits well those settled, patriarchal and bourgeois prerogatives privileging property.

The model is occasionally referred to in the main body of the thesis but may remain in the background - any schematic model is insufficient to literature - yet the model does, I would argue, have the virtue of resistance to a legacy of patriarchal and colonial structures. By using Hamlet and the *femme fatale* the model is designed to accommodate the specifically literary imagination.

In the model's outlay of Law of the Father and Law of Desire it would be possible to use the term 'Other' instead of 'signifier'. However, the term 'Other' is now too often vulgarised to mean anything which *looks* different in the flesh. This derisory, dangerous and compacted version of the 'Other' only supplements the visibility of a father-occluded Imaginary, and indeed only intensifies the Law of the Father.⁴

By easily fetishising resistance and by relying heavily on an unqualified embrace of the politics of disruption (if not destruction) in the name of 'agency', these counter-discourses have not been able to produce the philosophical resources that would help to even begin to consider deeply the political and ethical ramifications of what it is to have been, and to still be, a slave or to have been once named a native. (Mbembé 2006: 149)

Feminist and post-colonial criticism in politics and literature is too often characteristically performed in the fetishised medium and distance of white-black or male-female flesh,

³ "Ninth Progress Report: Private Property." The All-Party Oireachtas Committee On The Constitution. Dublin: Stationary Office. Appendix A, p. 187.

⁴ The racial other still tends only to be heard when the racial other has mastered mildly reset, patriarchal codes of discourse - Anglo-culture remains stubbornly monoglot and Imaginary. The flesh is willing to change, but the signifier remains the same. Even in the slippage and error of comedy, English is given over to more Imaginary provisions. Take Frye's celebrated formulation, "... comedy does not hold a mirror up to nature, but it frequently holds a mirror up to another mirror, and brings its resolution out of a double illusion." (Frye 1985: 112) The imitative sound-mirror of the other's ridiculed, foreign voice, or the sound-mirror in puns and double entendres, are staples of mirror-vocal English humour.

rather than in examining voices. Also, by a 'fleshed-out' version of post-coloniality and feminism, the issue of class inequality remains largely under-theorised or uncontested.

The thesis might be summarised as an examination of images and a narration of voices not coherent with the images. Deane considers the limits of counter-discourses in another manner:

Postcolonial theory conspires at times with the very essentialisms that it wishes to rebuke; it permits the reintroduction of the "feminized" construct that it took so much trouble to expel, and it is persuaded to do so in the name of "Art." In a similar but also different way, feminism confronts this issue, wishing to assert for itself a radical independence that is, over and again, rearticulated in the residually essentialist discourse it wishes to erase. Perhaps Irigaray's way of going through it in order to come out the other side, or on the side of the Other, is the only recourse. A stereotype should not perhaps be demolished until it has been reinhabited. (Deane 1993: 55)

A stereotype is an effort to short circuit the distance in identity (or gaps in recognition), between the coloniser and colonised, but the danger is of that of developing a foolish art abdicating responsibility for its own, albeit at times artificial and creative, sense of identity. Carleton's character who wishes to 'inhabit' and imitate an aristocratic English position, is aptly named 'Art Fool.' The stereotype is a foolish art - my working definition of a stereotype is the subject subjected to authority, but who refuses responsibility. The mother is the exceptional (phallic) stereotype, who takes on all responsibility still without having authority.⁵

I agree with Deane, and Homi Bhabha writing in *The Location of Culture* (1994), how the stereotype is a key political concern of post-colonial theory - how can the stereotype be reinhabited, or withered away? Accompanying any loss of language, there is a loss of sexuality and a loss of gesture - the stereotype functions as a template of gesture for a culture which has had its own gestures, including political gestures, placed under erasure. This is discussed most in the chapter on Friel.⁶ Yet when the stereotype became an answer to a dramatic loss of signification, the stereotype's language use, body language and intonation of speech now become present reality, and cannot simply be removed, except

⁵ This may lead to the person of 'mother' aiming for perfection, which is the highest orthodoxy and blasphemy at the same time. This also means the work of being a mother acquires a profound endlessness and requires a stupendous energy, trying to make perfect the family and the family economy, over which she is handed responsibility - see Chapter 5, on Edna O'Brien. A sub-thesis of this thesis might be to speculate over a deep connection between stereotypes and mothers.

⁶ Another possibility to consider would be Yeats's experiments in Noh theatre.

that is by demolition, or another traumatic encounter. Reinhabiting the stereotype (perhaps the parodic kernel of postmodern narrative and aesthetics), is one non-violent answer.

In the model, Figure 3 is a combination of both Figure 1 and Figure 2, but importantly also inverts them both for designating a father-occluded Imaginary.⁷ Lacan's description of the sign relates the signifier 'S' and signified 's' (Lacan 1999c: 149):

$$\frac{S}{s}$$

This description sets the Law of Desire (metonymy) above the Law of the Father (metaphor) and between them the bar of the phallus. In a father-occluded Imaginary, the sign characteristically is formed viz:

$$\frac{s}{S}$$

Now, in what becomes an image-saturated culture, the signifier 'S' exists as if barred beneath the signified (part explaining the prevalence of discourses of the unconscious arising in cultures with a father-occluded Imaginary, as if the signifier is apparently 'buried' and trapped in the unconscious).

Figure Three does retain phallic *jouissance* / positionality on the left, and feminine *jouissance* / positionality on the right, but is 'upside' down compared to Figure 2, with the signified placed 'above' the signifier. On the masculine side, discourses such as colonialism, racism and sexism institutionally provide for '*petit* primordial fathers' the largesse of colonial, racist, and sexist mastery. Symbolic castration is denied and over-promoted father-figures with their ferocious complacencies become normal in the colonial,

⁷ The singular image of the father in this Imaginary becomes a concomitant source of sibling rivalry as each sibling seeks to attain the singular position of the father. The beginnings of such a pattern are evinced in Carleton's *Going to Maynooth*. Sibling rivalry, indeed hatred, becomes what is usually an off-stage drama, so as not to disturb or complicate matters, and keep the position of the father centre-stage. Mitchell's book *Siblings* (2003) analyses the politics,

"... an observation of the importance of siblings, and all the lateral relations that take their cue from them, must lead to a paradigm shift that challenges the unique importance of understanding through vertical paradigms... the sibling situation introduces the threat of sameness - the clearer the difference established, the safer the dominant person."
(Mitchell 2003: 3, 223)

Such 'safety' is what Denis O'Shaughnessy seeks most of all – see Chapter 2.

racist and sexist necessity for many, *petit* primordial fathers, all practising a *petit* silence. Such re-structuring of the sign is suitable for a bureaucratic society and its acme, the military army.

Violence's capacity to allow arbitrary decisions, and thus to avoid the kind of debate, clarification and renegotiation typical of more egalitarian social relations, is obviously what allows its victims to see procedures created on the basis of violence as stupid or unreasonable. One might say, *those relying on the fear of force are not obliged to engage in a lot of interpretative labour*, and thus, generally speaking, do not. (Graeber 2006: 7, italics mine)

This is as much true of bureaucratic systems as an army - bureaucrats are those who frank forms with the imprimatur of the State, and are stereotypically considered stupid or unreasonable - this befits their position as *petit*, primordial fathers. Bureaucracy and armies engage the other in what is effectively a silent conversation wherein the bureaucratic system or army need not, and should not speak, since all interpretive strategies are now predefined.

There are traces of the link between coercion and absurdity even in the way we talk about bureaucracy in English: note for example, how most of the colloquial terms that specifically refer to bureaucratic foolishness, SNAFU, Catch-22 and the like — derive from military slang. (Graeber 2006: 6)

The exception of the primordial becomes the rule, of little dictators.⁸

On the masculine side of Figure 3 (inverted versus Figure 2), instead of One Necessity (Order) viz the primordial or authoritarian father being the norm, now 'Many – Possible (Worlds)', or a latent multiculturalism assumes the norm. 'One - Necessity (Order)' now becomes the exception, and discourses of 'crisis' and social breakdown follow as dominant discourses in the media.⁹ On the feminine side of Figure 3, versus the 'Impossibility' of

⁸ A logic much discussed in political theory especially in the aftermath of the WTC attacks., for instance Giorgio Agamben's *Homo Sacer. Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (1998). For an overview, see Munster's essay *The War On Terrorism: When The Exception Becomes The Rule* (2004).

⁹ The kernel of logic regulating of the Oedipal complex is that the knowledge of the *subject not being* exceptional (there is another who distracts the mother, usually the father), itself becomes the most important, threatening and exceptional knowledge. The knowledge contained in the statement, 'I am not an exceptional being', becomes super-critical, exceptional knowledge. Proving the inverse, 'I am an exceptional being', becomes the greatest pleasure of such Oedipalised subjects. For the masculine subject, the knowledge that 'I am an exceptional being' *must appear* to others, and has mostly Imaginary consequences. Secondary castration arises from the crisis of the boy-child when this difference, that there exists another, the father, has the same Imaginary gender as him, and the question of difference becomes a question of Imaginary prowess.

communication being the norm, now it becomes 'Impossible' not to communicate (voluntarism and/or discourses of therapy prevail). Instead of 'Infinite Contingency' being the exception, now 'Infinite Contingency', via the notion of cultural relativity, becomes the norm (chaos is a name-of-the-father). The apparent (tabloid) chaos supplements the discourses of crisis on the masculine side, actually limiting the range of difference between the feminine and masculine, yet keeping the masculine prevalent at the centre of the crisis (Chapter 7 has a more full discussion).

In a father-occluded Imaginary the sign has been near inverted and skewed by the cultural prevalence and lionization of phallic *jouissance* (see Figure Two Movements). Thus, a father-occluded Imaginary tends to find great interest and comedy in the aesthetics of inversion. Satire, which turns an upside down world up again, and comedies dependent on inversion when positions are reversed (between men and women, or the innocent and guilty), became particularly prevalent in English literature in the eighteenth century. In this period,

The generally happy ending of a comedy may also at times barely manage to conceal another harsher feeling, of returning sobriety and returning awareness of the demands of law and order, of the fact that the levelling and revelling must soon come to a stop, that the world must move once more the right way up.
(Donaldson 1970: 206)

The generic conventions accord with how a child must leave behind its foolish ways to become an adult, and how leisure is to be constrained by set labour.¹⁰ The division between pairs is disbursed by a binary opposite logic, of the child *or* adult, leisure *or* labour. Binary opposites are underwritten by inversion, and the Oedipus complex, so much as it is practiced and explicated as a process of the son replacing the father, who then submits to the son, is a patrilinear aesthetic of inversion. Such an Oedipal aesthetic of inversion, and its nostalgic maxim of childhood left forever, underwrites a father-occluded Imaginary. In Chapter 2, I discuss how such an aesthetic of inversion can be seen to migrate into Ireland in the work of William Carleton, and especially how this aesthetic developed in the relationship between a father and son.

Importantly, though Schema R places the Name of the Father at the apex of the Symbolic and the child at the apex of the Imaginary, along with the phallus, the positions of father and child in a culture given over to phallic *jouissance* situate the position of the father as

¹⁰ Tony Johnson's attitude to leisure is an exemplary extreme - see Chapter 1.

largely an Imaginary construct, and the position of the child more like a Symbolic construct.¹¹ Figure 3 has been drawn so as to reflect this cultural imposition, with the position of the father in the left-Imaginary and lower-metaphoric section of the diagram. The position of the father is shielded from the signifier by knowledge, romance, ontology and the Discourse of the University - should the signifier be encountered, it is preferably in the Discourse of the Master. (Lacan 1999b: 16; Evans 1996: 44) The position of the child is in the right-Symbolic, upper-metonymic section of the diagram, 'closer' to the signifier.¹²

The position-as-child may well also be interpreted as ultimately constructed for recovering the history of the position of the father.¹³ As the analyst is bound over to listen, so is the position-as-child, but the position-as-child is a powerless, disingenuous and corrupted analyst under the threat *and* protection of the physical as well as structural, bureaucratic violence, located at the position of the father.

The most strenuous political and philosophical consideration of how the position of the child is occluded in a father-occluded Imaginary is from the Lockean, liberal tradition which has dominated the economics and philosophy of Anglophile culture, describing the infant as a *tabula rasa*, where the signifier literally has been erased and an image of blankness installed as originary.¹⁴ The Lockean *tabula rasa* is the *literal truth* of a father-occluded Imaginary.

The *tabula rasa* or clean-slate individual of liberal contract theory constitutes a fiction as great as its counterpart fiction of the many headed monster state, or Leviathan. *It is especially harmful to the political status of children...* In such a society, children are thought of as the happy entrants in its game of opportunity. (O'Neill 1997: 243, italics in original)¹⁵

¹¹ See Figure Two, notes 12-16.

¹² Newly born infants already have an appreciation of their own language - the signifier might even precede the ego in the womb. Moon et al. report how two-day old infants not only prefer their mother's voices but that of their native language, and respond with an awareness of "intonation patterns characteristic of their native language. Although it is possible that postnatal experience with the infant's language environment is sufficient to account for this native language preference, it seems more likely that the necessary experience occurred prenatally." (Moon et al. 1993: 499)

¹³ In so far as the position of the father is occupied by a *petit primordial*, over-promoted father who is ideologically set to nullify desire and the Other, then an actual child provides the opportunity for such a subject to safely engage with desire, not only in the child, but with his own. The child in this way does actually function as an analyst and an emasculated *femme fatale*.

¹⁴ From *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690), Book II, Chapter 1, §2.

¹⁵ Child labour was a significant part of the opportunities offered by a liberal-capitalist economy. In a survey in 1788, "children" made up two-thirds of the workforce on powered equipment in 143 water mills in England and Scotland. The 1835 Factory Reports survey of 982 mills in England

Notions of the universal child, with pre-established needs and interests, tend to short-circuit more far-reaching political debates about... the place of various groups of children - differentiated by class, ethnicity, religion, gender, and geographical location. (Stephens cited Helleiner 1998b: 51)

This 'happy entrance' to a game of opportunity drives the conditioned myth of childhood 'joyfulness', no matter a child's class, ethnicity, religion, gender, and geographical location. Such cultural conditioning only nullifies the political status of children, and those in the position-as-child, when they are all happy entrants in a game of opportunity. "The child (or childlike animal) has replaced the swain in modern expressions of the pastoral tradition." (Moss 1985: 231)¹⁶ The change of the swain to the child marks a change from feudalism to capitalism, whose key originary myth is of a free-market where the subject is a happy entrant in its game of opportunity.¹⁷ At the end of the eighteenth century, the myth of happy entry is consolidated in the happy, innocent, and apolitical childhood of sentimental and Romantic discourse.

In literature, Pinch points to how at the end of the eighteenth century, "a fascination with knowing feelings is closely coupled with a sense of their difficulty," and "it becomes productive *to see feelings* as difficult to measure". (Pinch 1996: 164, italics mine) The 'measurement' of feelings is a sign of a highly symbolized Imaginary, of Symbolic logic dominating in the Imaginary. This difficulty of measurement goaded the enjoinder of intellectual criticism with the Imaginary - the Enlightenment and the Romantic cult of Imagination are its prime expressions - and the 'innocent, desexualized, blank-slate' figure of the child would be an intellectual primer for practice reading in a Symbolic logic of the Imaginary anchoring a father-occluded Imaginary.

and Scotland in 1835, before the Factory Act of 1833 had fully taken effect, indicated that 43% of the workforce was under 18.

Work in mechanized factories required silent consistent effort, tolerance for close supervision, a willingness to work under non-personal contract, and the ability to work in close quarters with a large number of persons. In late eighteenth century Britain, these were largely new kinds of skills. (Galbi 1997: 358)

Work in mechanized factories "required and eventually created a new breed of worker." (Landes cited Galbi 1997: 358) The position-as-child was part of a new breed of subjectivities potentially treating the human as depoliticized flesh - unions (or a political form of intersubjectivity), were anathema to liberal economics. For adults, the rise of organized but 'apolitical' sport would be a more enduring form of 'happy entry' into games of opportunity - the rise of the Gaelic Athletic Association in 1884 by Michael Cusack, was perhaps a manifestation of Ireland's intended 'happy entry' to adulthood and national independence following such a programmatic.

¹⁶ Along with certain class associations, the provision of the pastoral by the presence of the infant is discussed in Chapter 2, for Laffan's *The Game Hen* (1979).

¹⁷ Azim connects Locke and his *tabula rasa* with the conditions of possibility for colonialism - "English and its study can be seen to serve the same purpose within England as in the colonies". (Azim 1993: 15-18)

John Mullan, in *Sentiment and Sociability: The Language of Feeling in the Eighteenth Century* (1988), traces how the body and its 'natural' signs were interpreted in the eighteenth century as manifesting a 'language of feeling', and in the discourse of sentiment such language provided for sympathy as the preferred basis of social intercourse. Sympathy was part of a philosophical project "of producing... society as a scheme of consensus and unanimity." (Mullan 1988: 25)¹⁸ What develops in the literature of the period is the "half-articulate relationship of writers and readers to their own thoughts and prejudices, a *silent conversation* best described as ideology". (Morillo 2001: 3, italics mine) The position-as-child is constructed to naturally embody this (stereotypical) half-articulated and yet fully sociable standard of 'natural' communication bringing consensus and unanimity in its wake.

Morillo's '*silent conversation*' is indicative of an Imaginary disposition to communication, and how the position-as-child is seen and not heard in political representation.

Identity is finally affirmed, in law, by taking the power of organising a *representation*. *Political* autonomy was the basis of a *cultural* identity... it is impossible to take speech and to retain it without a taking of power. To want *to be heard* means being committed to *making* history.

(de Certeau 1997: 32, italics in original)

By default, the position-as-child can neither self-affirm its own identity, organize representation, be politically autonomous through self-government, or assert an independent cultural identity - the position-as-child can neither be heard nor make history.¹⁹ While those in the position-as-child may know intimately what is going on around them, they must pretend otherwise.²⁰

Between representation and what is represented a particular type of relation emerges: those who are represented are not juxtaposed to representation, but representation makes them present to themselves as a totality, without, however, any of them being identified with that common language.

(De Certeau 1997: 26)

The position-as-child is excluded from "the power that society holds over it, or even the right that it has to 'verify' its own law", and so the position-as-child has no rightful access

¹⁸ The outcome of a language of feeling expressed through the 'natural' signs of the body has its comically sad outcome in the candlelit dinner scene and final ending of the romance between Calthleen and Mr. Gentleman, in Edna O'Brien's *The Country Girls* (1960), to be discussed in Chapter 5.

¹⁹ Yeats's *The Child in The Land of Heart's Desire* (1904) is an agent of history, by allegory.

²⁰ For instance, Millie in Marina Carr's play *The Mai* (1995)

even to a law it might verify in private. (de Certeau 1997: 27) This will be extremely important in both the politics of the private and public. In private, the Freudian primal scene is the trauma awaiting the position-as-child for wandering beyond its position in search of its own *jouissance*. This type of barred mobility between the public and private for the position-as-child means the position-as-child cannot create the private for itself, while the position-as-child is still restricted to the private another defines and excludes it from (mythically epitomised by the private scene of parental sex). That is, the private is in the gift of the father. However, the position-as-child is always in the public sphere of a silent conversation with the paternal gaze, or the voice of conscience, while not permitted a public *voice*, or its own political representation.

Yet the position-as-child is, as De Certeau notes, self-presence as a totality - just the happy or 'total' entry point to the game of opportunity stipulated by liberalism - but without the tangibility of self-reference or self-representation, without that is, access to the "common language" of the Law, either of the Father or Desire.²¹ The signifier must not be interrogated and the structure of the Law must not be questioned from the position-as-child, and at any rate, the position-as-child is its own totality.²² In this way, the position-as-child is *already* a voiceless, *petit*, primordial father.

A congruent, 'happy entrance' myth of childhood characterises the attitude of the coloniser to the native. The coloniser offers the native the same opportunity for 'happy entry' to the coloniser's legal, cultural, educational structures as well as the coloniser's language. The political ramifications for those in the position-as-child are far-reaching.

²¹ Lloyd discusses this ambivalence and sense of loss in his essay, *Colonial Trauma / Postcolonial Recovery?* (2000). Lloyd argues,

in the case of colonialism... the relation to the past is strictly not a relation to one's own past but to a social history and its material and institutional effects and is in no simple way a matter of internal psychic dynamics... it is not self-evident that there is any necessary relation between the psychological and the social that is not already ideological.

(Lloyd 2000: 212)

Marina Carr, I argue later, does *not* respond with the normative ideological response to trauma, that is trauma always constructed around the division of and traffic between the private and public, even around in Carr's drama, the subject of incest.

²² As for native Law, "there is hardly anything more pernicious, therefore, in the many European ways of interference with savage peoples, than the bitter animosity with which Missionary, Planter and Official alike pursue the sorcerer", the sorcerer being a "conservative force... [and] the main source of the wholesome fear of punishment and retribution indispensable in any orderly society." (Malinowski 1926: 93) The replacement of pagan 'fairy' culture, including medicine, with Catholicism, is one such dispensation mapped out in the difference between the cultural landscape of Carleton's *Phelim O'Toole's Courtship* and *Going to Maynooth*.

Hopes that the Act [of Union] might allow Catholics a greater share in *public* life were swiftly disappointed, and lingered as an open sore on the surface of the new body politic. The literary culture of Irish Romanticism is thus strongly marked by a sense of grievance, generated by broken political promises and failed rebellion. (Connolly cited Kilfeather 2006: 30, italics in original)

At the same time as colonial and Romantic tropes excluded the Irish from representation, Irish nationalism was co-opted into the same cultural efflorescence which conditioned its exclusion. For instance, the native in the position-as-child, being barred from organizing its own representation, is also barred from having secret societies which in fact are the *only* response to such a lack of the private (in the colonial father's gift). Secret agrarian societies, labelled 'Ribbonism', lent expression to the colonially ordained political frustrations of the peasant class under colonial rule, but such secret societies also 'played' into the trap of colonialism. Parnell, for a time, managed to combine both agendas in a parliamentary party with a programme for national independence.

The position-as-child then finally has its only sense of the private in contact with the father, in whose gift is the private. This is a scene of confession to the father. The version of the public and private, and mobility between them, granted by the coloniser to the colonised in Ireland was mediated finally by Catholicism, when finally the Catholic Hierarchy disciplined itself and its flock, and indeed replicated an aristocratic milieu. The primacy of confession, which before the Famine was held in light regard, and restrictions on house masses, as well as a purge of public, religious 'patterns', become new, critical components of Catholic practice in Ireland. (Miller 1975; Larkin 1972) In the 1830s, "Probably the average Catholic did not approach confession or communion more than once a year. The obligation of Sunday Mass was not taken very seriously." (Miller 1975: 89) The division of the private and public was reconfigured to reflect an aristocratic pattern, of visiting a castle-church, whose lord-priest, remained at a distance, held in awe, but to whom one must confess one's (religious or political) sins. Catholic confession built a confessional *structure of desire* characterising a 'silent conversation' (especially around sexual desire), devoted to speaking to the position of the father. All the position of the father demands is its own affirmation. While the private became confessional, the public became ritualistic, and a loss of sincerity accompanied both, since sincerity cannot come from the automatic affirmation of the other, that is, the father - Denis O'Shaughnessy in Carleton's *Going to Maynooth* is most a deeply insincere person.²³

²³ His insincerity is easily noted by how he treats Susan. Also, in catholic confession, penitents confess illusory and convenient sins so as to satisfy the priest in the position of the father.

In short, the structure of patriarchal and colonial representation makes mobility between private and public for the position-as-child either an impossible trauma in the primal scene, or an illegality, in banned, secret societies.²⁴ A traumatic, Oedipalised aesthetics of the sublime are added to the aesthetic of inversion - overthrowing the father or state is like overthrowing a mountain - politics becomes insincere, and revolution a primal scene. The ideological problem for the position of the father becomes one of correct management, and the method for managing the structure of desire around the position-as-child will be that of managing infantile sexuality.

Certainly, Foucault has written powerfully and persuasively of how the problem of childhood from the eighteenth century onwards is the problem of correct management. The family as a kinship system or mechanism for the transmission of property no longer fulfils the family's social obligations. Henceforth, the family serves more as an "environment which envelops, maintains and develops the child's body". (Foucault 1977: 172-173) The conjugal bond between parents as a family's primary axis is diminished in order to "organise the matrix of the new adult individual" anticipated from the child. (Foucault 1977: 173) Instead of the conjugality of parents, the "new 'conjugality' lies rather in the link between parents and children." (Foucault 1977: 173) Health becomes paramount as the family's essential governing principle and obligation; "medical acculturation" rapidly expands and focuses on "care of children, especially babies." (Foucault 1977: 173) Political as well as medical questions have increasingly within their speculative and diagnostic prescriptions a hygienist, flesh-incensed mentality, augmenting a prescriptive, father-occluded Imaginary. Policing the flesh of the child becomes *the* normative path to socialization.

The child's sexuality is the trick by which the close-knit, affective, substantial, and cellular family was constituted and from whose shelter the child was extracted. The sexuality of children was a trap into which parents fell. It *is an evident trap... intended for the parents...* that allowed the child to be shifted from his family milieu to the institutionalized and normalised space of education. (Foucault 2003: 257-258, italics mine)

Perhaps this is how and why Father Peter Connolly could conjecture in 1980: "when religion would go in Ireland, it would go so fast that no one would know what was happening." (cited Kiberd 2001)

²⁴ Just this barred mobility between the public and private for the actual child is discussed in Chapter 3, and May Laffan's story, *Filters, Tatters and the Counsellor* (1879). Francie Brady, the erstwhile child fugitive who forms a secret society with his friend Joe, in Patrick McCabe's *Butcher Boy* (1992), might be considered part of the trickle-down Imaginary of this past.

This obligatory, conjugal, medicalised path to socialisation for the adult by the adult's relation to the child is equivalent to the Law of the Father, whose normalisation in patriarchy is work assigned mostly to the mother. The father retains foundational sanction and authority, beginning archetypally at baptism by placing flesh on an already existent patronymic. The fundamental action of the Law of the Father is the placing and policing of flesh on the signifier, a process education extends, by placing 'knowledge' over the flesh.

However, against the discursive expansion of knowledge through education, around sexuality, "Things are glossed over, veiled, expressed metaphorically, and a stylistics of discretion is invented in the confession and in spiritual direction." (Foucault 2003: 232) Kilfeather, for instance, notes "that in nineteenth-century Irish fiction there are recurring dramatizations of a great silence around sex." (Kilfeather 1997: 84) Along with metaphorical language use,

the architecture of educational establishments, the arrangement of sites and things, the way in which dormitories are laid out, surveillance is institutionalized... in which the entire space of visibility is carefully organized. (Foucault 2003: 232)

In late eighteenth and early nineteenth century debates on education, children were at once "the abodes of innocence and youth", but also "thriving prisoners" of an education system (in England developed by Lancaster and Bell) modelled and arranged on a panopticon formation with a "stern preceptor"²⁵ as teacher. (Foakes 1989: 187)

Now the body is invested by mechanisms of power that seek to render it both docile and useful. There is a political anatomy of the body. (Foucault 2003: 193)

Foucault's analysis applies *in toto* for the position-as-child and with the same fundamental consequences for how the native positioned as a child is correctly managed by colonial authority. Giving over the child is the sacrifice constantly demanded by a colonial pedagogical imperative. The "training of children builds itself on the loss of the cultural habit of assuming the agency of responsibility in radical alterity". (Spivak 2004: 540) The expectant loss of the native or child's agency of responsibility is crucial yet radically ambivalent, for the native or child might still be held responsible by a system of law which is not at his own disposal or access. Such a system of government ineffably produces the stereotype, or the subject with responsibility but without authority, who then refuses or

²⁵ A quote from Coleridge's *Frost at Midnight* (1798), line 37.

denies that responsibility (spawning a culture of denial). The "torn cultural fabric of responsibility" amongst the subordinate, native culture must now "base the agency of responsibility in that outside of the self that is also in the self, half-archived and therefore not directly accessible". (Spivak 2004: 544) Law for the native *must* acquire a half-articulated expression, when the native stands denuded of authority in the position-as-child.²⁶ The 'outside' of the native's self must be framed by the colonial position of the father, or equivalently, the colonial gaze. The most important stereotype of all is the mother - the mother hands over the child, and herself, to the patriarchal, colonial father. The mother shall be the stereotype given over to a life of normalising the patriarchal, colonial Law of the Father. For instance, Friel's play *Translations* (1980) dramatises how Maire normalises the 'good' colonial father, Yolland.

The political anatomy of the native culture is re-constituted so that the native is infantilized and policed in a position-as-child, not as constructed by the native culture, but by the colonising culture - the Irish were positioned as *English* children in an English gaze (and with the national school system inaugurated in 1834 conducted exclusively in English, positioned as *children* of English).

Further, the intimate configuration of colonial control over the native depends on the native culture internalizing a discourse on infantile sexuality. In effect the barred desire of infantile sexuality performs *metonymically* as the entire, barred, native system of desire, i.e. the Law of the Father and Desire in native culture. The coloniser and colonised must both be correctly and correctively shocked at any expression of either infantile sexuality or native desire not amenable to colonial absorption. An intense culture of shame must operate in parallel between the two sets of desire in colonial and native culture, policed by a colonial gaze martialling the margins of the native self and native culture.

As far as the native culture can be arrested, positioned, and policed in the position-as-child, then colonial structures can systematically be tested, transferred and subsequently function both in the colonies and in the homeland.²⁷ Henceforth, all legitimate native desire must

²⁶ A symptomatic silence and loss of gesture are discussed for Friel's drama in Chapter 6. Another manifestation of the staggered prolepsis of the position of the father is how no woman ever comes back from the future - the prodigal daughter hardly exists when always it is only the father awaiting in the future. This indeed is part of the superfluosity of the position-as-child - *the prodigal daughter does not exist because she never had responsibility in the first instance* - as well as the seriality of a father-occluded Imaginary.

²⁷ Williams argues persuasively for Ireland "as the primary colonial laboratory for the development of modern policing", when the prolific traffic between England and Ireland, as well as "the peculiar crisis of alien rule and state legitimation", had "profound effects on the transformation of

subtend the colonial position of the father where legitimate sexuality is placed, and in the colonial culture, desire is simplified and coercively organized in a father-occluded Imaginary around the position of the colonial father. Gender and child-adult binary divisions lie at the foundational, metaphorical heart of difference in patriarchal colonialism. Since in patriarchy sexuality is accession to the position of the father (*jouissance* more generally is access to the Law, both of the Father or Desire), and the position of the father is taken by force of colonial violence, native sexuality henceforth arises from a proleptic accession to the position of the father as that position is denominated by patriarchal or colonial force.²⁸

The native position of the father is systematically undermined most of all by the loss of native language. The Irish have an unusual history in this regard, for volunteering the impulse to learn English. "It is more unusual for descendants of a destroyed culture to join in the disparagement of a lost language. It smacks of a parricidal impulse." (Lee 1989: 670) Forfeiting a language is a parricidal impulse, one which would then inhibit native sexual relations.²⁹ Hence, the logic of the 'devotional revolution' was not concerned only with Catholic devotion, but obtaining sexuality itself, by an intensified, superior and more royal, version of Anglo-sexuality, which was still 'different' enough so as to gainsay a politics of identity and political difference. However, the absolutely critical transference was around a discourse of infantile sexuality wedded to the construction of the position-as-child.

hegemonic strategies of domination. Indeed Ireland was repeatedly cast as a state of permanent exception... [it was] in the colony of Ireland that the conception of and desirability for a system of police first took shape. We need then to reconsider the genealogy of the police idea from Colquhoun to Peel and beyond through the spectre of colonial warfare." (Williams 2003: 325, 332) "The establishment of a national police force was a first step in a general and massive state intervention into Irish society which had as its primary directive the eradication of all modes of organization and all ways of living that were inassimilable and threatening to colonial conditions of surplus extraction." (Williams 2003: 339)

²⁸ Frank O'Connor in his short stories will often illustrate very well how accession to the position of the father sexualises an Irishman. In *Darcy and the Land of Youth* (published 1949, *New Yorker* magazine), Mick, a sexually forlorn expatriate in England, brings over his friend Chris as his 'son' in England - this permits him to engage in a sexual relation with Janet. (O'Connor 1980: 262-282) In *Unapproved Route* (published 1952, *New Yorker* magazine), Hourigan runs off to England but then returns home to be a responsible father only after he learns of becoming a father with Rosalind. There are many references comparing Hourigan to Hamlet. Hourigan is "given to funny stories and inexplicable fits of morose anger." (O'Connor 1982: 413) Hourigan complains, "I was in a terrible state", like the rotten state of Denmark (O'Connor 1982: 419) Rosalind (her name has Shakespearean undertones), while in hospital and on drugs, says she can hear the children playing at *Hamlet*, "on the doorstep". (O'Connor 1982: 418) Accession to the position of the father either in role play or in fatherhood is far more sexually exciting to Mick and Hourigan than sex itself, and similarly for Hamlet. Without accession to the position of the father they all are hystericalised - their actual sexual activity is immaterial.

²⁹ For instance, but not exclusively, in the connection between language acquisition and gesture - this is discussed in more depth in Chapter 6 for the drama of Brian Friel.

This is the central connection between the emergence of the sentimental and Romantic figure of the child, and the simultaneous repression of infantile sexuality, for together, they become a legitimate basis for the remodelling, subjugation, and managing of the entire system of native desire in the colonics, as much for the coloniser as for the colonised. The successful projection of colonial desire and power depends on the coloniser and colonised internalizing such inferences of half-articulated shame connecting the child and infantile sexuality.

However, something wonderful is about to take place in this period in terms of articulation - a star shall be born called Hamlet. In this father-occluded Imaginary, positing half-articulated sympathy as the basis of sociability, the Romantic reception of Hamlet appears as the fully-articulated (phallic) exception. Hamlet is also a good grounding for the stereotype, the subject who refuses responsibility - Hamlet had after all left the country to study, and had no intention of returning till it was forced upon him. Hamlet is also excellent grounding for a colonial stereotype, or a subject who acts only after his father is unlawfully killed.

Coleridge, the leading English Romantic theorist, relied on Shakespeare's authority to introduce and illustrate principles of criticism, and to treat Shakespeare's characters as revealing elementary laws of the human mind.³⁰ R. A. Fogle argues all Coleridge's literary criticism "is an attempt to explain the language of passion, or the 'logic of passion,' and its relations with and differences from the language of *ordinary* logic and exposition". (Fogle 1971: 147) To the Romantics, Hamlet exemplifies an exceptional logic of passion - Hamlet-ringing criticism is at the centre of the Romantic logic of fully articulated yet immeasurable passion. In his lectures on literature, Coleridge spoke of how Hamlet manifests "Shakespeare's deep and accurate science in mental philosophy", and it is therefore "essential to the understanding of Hamlet's character, that we should reflect on the constitution of our own minds". (Coleridge 1987: 543)³¹ Indeed, the subsequent re-imagining of the dramatic significance of interiority in the early decades of the nineteenth century was fundamental to what we think of today as 'modern' drama, and *Hamlet*, in the interpretations of Goethe and Coleridge, becomes the more radically introspective template

³⁰ The trend continues: "Shakespeare now functions as the international baccalaureate for directors, a kind of standardised test in which the emphasis is not on the play but on what has been done to it." (Fintan O'Toole, "The death of the playwright?" *Irish Times*, October 21, 2005).

³¹ More recently, Steven Berkoff staffs the same post: "Since Hamlet touches the complete alphabet of human experience every actor feels he is born to play it... So you cannot be miscast for Hamlet - '*fatally* miscast' as one critic called me in fact since he too had *his* version of Hamlet fixed in his head." (Berkoff 1989: vii, italics in original).

of modern drama. (Ackerman 2001: 119-21)³² Instead of Hamlet being One among Many, Hamlet becomes the One in the Many.

Hamlet also functions as a template of criticism, in how he

arrives back from Wittenberg with too many schemata available for interpreting the events at Elsinore of which he is already a part... Thus Hamlet's problem is close to that of the literary critics who have asked: "What is going on in *Hamlet*?" (MacIntyre 2002: 4, 5)

The template of both dramatic interiority and modern criticism is built around Hamlet and a logic of the passions insistently asking, what is going on? Hamlet's fully articulated stupefaction has the beginnings of Hamlet as the exceptionally good, position-as-child.

Romantic critics had rejected classical models (with their discussion of republican politics). By their shift of emphasis from plot to character they indirectly established a "newfound autonomy" for the subject, symbolised in Hamlet's character, and this "newfound autonomy emerges in response to a new critical problem: delay". (de Grazia 2001: 364) Foregrounding Hamlet's delay produced "a psychological rather than a dramaturgical problem". (de Grazia 2001: 365) This problem of delay is exactly the problematic delay for attaining the position of the father - Hamlet's dearest wish.

However, since the play takes place after the criminal and murderous deposition of the rightful father-king, old Hamlet, the play may then also function as a template of usurpation, stamped with the era's colonial, political unconscious. After all, in Act 5, Hamlet always falls, as MacPherson said of the Celts in *Ossian* (1765). Hamlet is a figure who typically "insists on removing himself from events that he is nevertheless at the centre of". (Greenburg cited Charnes 2006: 54) Hamlet is readily interpreted as a stereotype, avoiding responsibility, who then, trying to take responsibility for himself and authority over others, fails miserably. Instead, he falls and invites a martial, Nordic neighbour to rule, and so even the exceptional (phallic) stereotype has its perfect functionality for colonial modelling of the native. As a political fable anticipating failure and self-defeat for

³² Garrick played Hamlet at the Smock Alley theatre in 1742, in preparation for his London performances, with a Dublin waif, Peg Woffington, as Ophelia - the play had a rapturous reception. "Nothing could be more graceful, more pathetic, more beautiful, than Woffington as Ophelia... her madness filled the house with awe and brought tears to many eyes." (Ryan 1998: 8). Fifty years on, *Hamlet* was being performed in Dublin with the famous soprano, Mrs. Billington, playing Ophelia. Billington's acclaimed inclusion had apparently "the prime object of introducing her much-admired interpretation of Purcell's song 'Mad Bess'." (Boydell 1988: 20) Shakespeare's text was not held in Romantic awe.

the native, *Hamlet* could hardly be improved upon - it has the efficiency and perfection of a colonial dream-text.

Margreta De Grazia's study of *Hamlet*, *Hamlet without Hamlet* (2007), begins by noting the now frequently noted point, that "Hamlet's deep and complex inwardness was not perceived as the play's salient feature until around 1800". (De Grazia 2007: 1) Romantic critics considered earlier generations, though appreciative of the play, had an appreciation of the wrong sort, "Seeing they saw not". (De Grazia 2007: 1) Instead, De Grazia highlights the blind spot in all this, how "for Hamlet to remain modern, the premise of the play had to drop out of sight", meaning Hamlet's dispossession of a kingdom. (De Grazia 2007: 1) Charnes argues that "an Elizabethan audience worried about English succession in the last years of Elizabeth's life would have considered the threat to Denmark as a nation *at least* as important as Hamlet's state of mind." (Charnes 2006: 27, italics in original) The Romantic version of *Hamlet* occludes and normalises this dispossession, or the breakage of the native, patronymic link to land. "Hamlet's disengagement from the land-driven plot is the very precondition of the modernity ascribed to him after 1800." (De Grazia 2007: 4) Further, reference to land within the play, such as 'hide', denoting a measure of land, and 'Doomsday', conjoining land and law, have been elided from two centuries of commentary. Indeed, De Grazia insists on how "a 200-year old critical tradition has been built on an oversight (and of the play's premise, no less)." (de Grazia 2007: 5) Hamlet's name and its meaning are also fundamentally displaced:

Amidst so many instances [in the play] of the close kinship between human and humus, man and manor, titles and entitlement, *dominus* and *domus*, even the protagonist's name begins to resonate. *Hamme*, as the earliest dictionaries establish, derives from the Germanic word for home. A hamlet is a cluster of homes: a kingdom in miniature. (De Grazia 2007: 6)

De Grazia is entirely convincing and emphatic: "The critical tradition that has identified *Hamlet* with the onset of the modern period has ignored the centrality of land." (De Grazia 2007: 43) This, De Grazia notes, is "a remarkable turn of events. In an hereditary monarchy like England's, it would have been unthinkable" (De Grazia 2007: 1). This 'unthinkable' turn of events was hugely popular in performance, criticism and painting at the beginning of the nineteenth century.

While armed insurrection had taken place in Ireland in 1798, Hamlet begins to occupy centre stage in the English, colonial Imaginary.³³ This ur-text of European Romanticism is simultaneously a play transpiring in colonies with the dispossession of native elites, and a consummation devoutly wished for, the fall of the dispossessed native prince and an invitation to a Nordic race to govern. Precisely this appeal to extra-territorial justice meant in the aftermath of World War II in Berlin, *Hamlet*

recommended itself to the United States military authorities as an exemplary moral and political instrument, especially in terms as apparently straightforward as its treatment of 'corruption and justice'. (Hawkes 2002: 184)

Charnes notes how the contemporary "fetishising of Shakespeare enjoins an historical narcolepsy". (Charnes 2006: 52) Partly such historical narcolepsy is over the 'universal' claims made for Shakespeare's genius, a genius transcending history advocated by Romantic critics such as Coleridge.

However, a distinctive form of historical narcolepsy defines *Hamlet's* final, rhetorical flourishes. Hamlet gives his "dying voice" to Fortinbras (5.2.308), who returns, "Good night, sweet prince." (5.2.311) Standing in front of a pile of dead bodies and the remnants of Denmark's court, Fortinbras says,

For me, with sorrow I embrace my fortune;
I have some rights of memory in this kingdom,
Which now to claim my vantage doth invite me. (5.2.343-345)

Not only does Hamlet metaphorically go to 'sleep', but now Fortinbras wakes up and remembers "some rights of memory in this kingdom." The play's historical narcolepsy is completed and sutured with a memory of Nordic rights over a ruined court and a waiting land, now *tabula rasa*, ready to accede to Fortinbras's 'rights', as if the land itself can, upon

³³ Analysing how the film *L.A. Story* (1991, dir. Jackson) operates as a postmodern rendition of *Hamlet*, Charnes point out how, "in a textbook example of disavowal" (Charnes 2002: 41), it is

no accident that the racial and socio-economic world represented in the film is almost entirely white and upper-middle class... its relief is merely a bulwark against the racial and class conflicts that in the 1990s were making Los Angeles, and American culture more generally, a pressure cooker ready to explode. The film was released virtually on the eve of the Rodney King beating. (Charnes 2006: 42)

The play has had a tremendous post-World War II rate of production in film - over forty film versions exist. Charnes notes how the "last few years of the millennium saw a *Hamlet* boom unmatched since the onset of American mass media." (Charnes 2006: 52, 53) At a period of racial tension and American neo-colonial adventurism, *Hamlet's* popularity comes to the fore.

his arrival, forget older rights and memories there already. Adam Smith in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759) had already enjoined a 'historical' narcolepsy as natural to the child, "who feels only the uneasiness of the present moment, which can never be very great". (cited Armstrong 2005: 14) Hamlet's death brings only the uneasiness of the present moment, which can never be very great, since Fortinbras is to take over the kingdom. In regard of historical narcolepsy, Hamlet is an exceptionally good child.

In the representation of land in the period, landscape painting and nature poetry dominate cultural production. The engridment by enclosure of public space had

brought 'regional' difference into sharp focus in the Romantic era, rendering them mappable as commensurable or interchangeable varieties of sameness ('subcultures') and reconceiving them as personal attributes or 'possessions'.
(Buzard 2001: 295)

Land in England was effectively block privatised and amorously personalised - liberal economics and Romantic criticism equally condoned economic and personal autonomy as the virtuous and natural state of man, and state of Nature. Romantic *Hamlet* is a play of the interiorised travails of doomed political resistance, the native's pyrrhic future, except in so far as the native accepts dispossession of land and title for the privileges of a sumptuous birth and a colonial education. What transpires with *Hamlet* around 1800 preferentially maps out the native's dispossession of land, and simultaneously, a compensatory return in the valorised language and culture of the native. Access to the Law (*jouissance*) and land is mournfully held away from the position-as-child, while in the cultural representations of Anglo-colonialism, the child, the native, Hamlet, and the Celt become the colourfully adumbrated, title-less tenants of Romantic modernity, with little access to the means of production.

Along with the play's exemplary treatment of land and extra-territorial appeal for justice, *Hamlet* goes still further in advancing the political unconscious of the patriarchal coloniser. *Hamlet* connects Foucault's analysis and the Law of the Father through the centrality of policing in the play. Terence Hawkes draws a parallel inference for the play and a playwright's critical regulation of both the play and its audience:

Hamlet seems remarkable for the degree to which it seeks to prescribe, moderate, or 'police' responses to itself and, ultimately, for the self-consciousness with which it draws attention to its own activities in this sphere. 'Look,' it periodically seems almost to boast, 'See how I can control you.'
(Hawkes 2002: 179)

Hawkes goes on, that with all kinds of "briefing," and "policing" in the play, as well as the performance of *The Mousetrap* placing Claudius under observation so as to secure evidence against him,

It's hardly surprising that the cumulative effect of all these individual efforts at moulding, shaping, or recording the behaviour of other is to confirm *Hamlet* as a play of supervision, watching, eavesdropping, and *trap-setting*. (Hawkes 2002: 180, italics mine)

Hamlet exemplifies not only the policing of a corrupt rule, but in its drama of interiority, an idealised self-policing, one that finally blunts Hamlet's political aptitude. Further, such

'policing' interventions serve ultimately to cloud the differences between hero and villain, they do so as part of a broader function which not only muddies the distinction between play-world and real world, but disturbingly *reduces the distance between right and wrong*.

(Hawkes 2002: 183-184, italics mine)

"Now I might do it pat" (3.3.73), meaning to obey the dead, righteous father, and kill the corrupt king, brings a potential threat of both salvation and damnation.³⁴ The resolution to this policing, self-policing and moral ambiguity, is policing by Fortinbras.

As for moral equivocation, other commentators have pointed to the moral ambiguities upon which the figure of the child is constructed, especially in its colonial framing.

The constitution of the colonised subject as 'child' is a brilliantly effective strategy for managing the ambivalence of exploitation and nurture. The *child is both inherently evil and potentially good*, thus submerging the moral conflict of colonial occupation. The child, at once both, other and same, holds in balance the contradictory tendencies of imperial rhetoric: authority is held in balance with nurture; domination with enlightenment; debasement with idealization; negation with affirmation; exploitation with education; filiation with affiliation.

(Ashcroft 2001: 36, italics mine)

the colonised individual - the object and subject of venality - introduced himself into the colonial relationship by a specific art, that of doubling and simulacrum. Now, to simulate is to cease to inhabit one's body, one's gestures, one's words, one's consciousness, at the very moment one confers them to another. It works to preserve, in each time and circumstance, the possibility of telling oneself stories, of saying one thing and doing the opposite - in short, of

³⁴ Shakespeare's best pun has been lost but now recovered. Besides imagining old, dead Hamlet on Hamlet's shoulder, the audience might hear Hamlet speaking with an Irishman named Pat on the other shoulder, an Irishman urging young Hamlet to do something, anything, anything other than procrastinate, let his father's killer away, and bore the audience. If instead 'pat' was spelled Pat, or 'pat' was heard 'Pat', an amity might have sprung up between the English and Irish, Hamlet could be 'the Irish play', and centuries of conflict averted.

constantly *blurring the distinction between truth and falsehood.*

(Mbembé 2001: 237, italics mine)

The reduction of the distance between right and wrong is constructed upon a reduction of the distance between the child and father positions in a violent relation tied together in a father-occluded Imaginary, whereby the colonial father's criminal violence is vindicated and esteemed nothing. Lovefulness and corruption at the position of the father is in contrast to the lovelessness and innocence at the position-as-child, but one is the obscene support for the other. Personal failures to 'live up' to this idealised position of the colonial or patriarchal father do not disturb the position of the father, such is the blurring of truth and falsehood. Failure, as long as it seems exceptional, only intensifies the reproduction of the position of the father - any failure is mitigated by the inordinate love attached to the position of the father.³⁵ The innocence of the child is provided (transferred onto) to the subject who would be father, and this, fundamentally, is the corrupt utility of childhood innocence.

This all makes for an astonishingly conservative society, where mobility is minimized and legitimated only going towards the position of the father, till death does them part, and unite.³⁶ The sentimental or Romantic position-as-child is the reification in flesh of patriarchal fantasies demanding

a language for life and a literature for ever - it is the very innocence of the appeal which... requires the scrutiny... For what could be a language for life and literature for ever, other than the eternal return of the same (the same child and the same literature).
(Rose 1993: 133)

unfortunately, a different kind of newness - an invading newness - can be forced into the world by imperial power. This is sameness masquerading as newness, an erection of boundaries where none may have been.
(Ashcroft 2005: 93)

The position-as-child is made through its entrapment in a father-occluded Imaginary for exalting 'sameness' masking as newness (meaning innocence, or colonial promises of modernity and progress). The agency of the letter favours a similar interpretation:

³⁵ The exceptionality of the 'bad father' is crucial to patriarchal propaganda. The bad father in fact serves patriarchy very well as long as the exception is proven to be outside the norms of settled, patriarchal existence. This is discussed in Chapter 7 for Marina Carr.

³⁶ The discourse carrying the subject away from the position of the father is romance, if in a disingenuous fashion - see especially Chapter 5.

The alphabetic character circulates, revolves and metamorphoses Amleth into Hamlet: the old parts are all there, so the memory lingers, but Amleth is no longer iterable. Viewed from a different perspective, the propriety of the name Hamlet is hardly particular, because it disguises, but fails to conceal, the name Amleth. The evolution of the new name is therefore a function of the revolution of the old one. Amleth is Hamlet in potentia; Hamlet re-marks, re-inscribes Amleth.
(Cary 1994: 784)

A recycled, paternal letter is the truth of the play's intent to co-ordinate a father-occluded Imaginary, a fully articulated, self-policed position-as-child yielding to what is only a barely mystified, colonial agent. The seriality of the letter is a token of its profound conservatism.

Yeats identified strains of *Hamlet* in nineteenth century Irish drama, and despised such influences commenting in *An Introduction for My Plays* (1937) how the Irish stage in the latter half of the nineteenth century was for him a dull exercise in "dressing the stage," the term for how players "must always face the audience, and stand far apart when they speak". (Yeats 2001: 24) "Dressing the stage" is an excellent metaphor for this monological style of acting and subjectivity since as adults we dress ourselves, and only then appear in public. Dressing the stage is then a metaphor for a certain kind of privacy. Since typically the only other people adults dress are children, to address / dress others, those others need positioned-as-children, and when any person is "dressing the stage", other people around the stage tend to be positioned as children. The condescension is generally appalling, when those dressing the stage appear as if they are in charge of the private and public divide for all in attendance. Such a declamatory mode of address highlighting individual characters as if they control their own acting space, and the private and public, had for Yeats been "mixed up with too many bad plays to be endurable." (Yeats 2001: 24) In his Introduction to *Certain Noble Plays of Japan* (1916) by Ezra Pound and Ernest Fenollosa, Yeats takes the opportunity to "explain a certain possibility of the Irish dramatic movement", as well as disparage any 'dressing the stage', and instead praise Noh's more graceful gestures of movement and voice:

Instead of the players working themselves into a violence of passion indecorous in our sitting-room, the music, the beauty of form and voice all come to a climax in pantomimic dance. (Yeats 1959: 151)

One sign of the arrival of the post-colonial would be a goodbye to Hamlet and dressing the stage, in both literature and criticism. Yeats also rejected literary conventions privileging the eye over euphony.

I have spent my life in clearing out of poetry every phrase written for the eye,
and bringing all back to the syntax that is for the ear alone. (Yeats 2001: 24)

However, rather than reject drama, Yeats had faith in the possibilities of the stage as a radical practice which would attend to a "double session of representation rather than reintroduce the individual subject through totalizing concepts of power and desire". (Spivak 1988: 279) In a father-occluded Imaginary, through totalising concepts of power and desire, there is only one session of representation defined around accessing the position of the father, a session dominated by narratives illuminating the failures and successes of quests to locate, occupy or renew the position of the father. The position-as-child is a symptom of this single session and a narrative border around the position of the father. The position-as-child is at the limit of both the patriarchal and colonial gaze.

This thesis hopefully illuminates a more double session of representation, of a father-occluded Imaginary, and dissenting voices, and hopefully might function as a literary resource for what it might have been, and still is, to be positioned as a child. The mainstream patrolling of language by Imaginary codes of identity politics centred on discourses of rights and mastery orientates language away from "real communication. More than a deterioration of language, what we are witnessing today is a need for language." (de Certeau 1997: 28) There is a need, not for more children, but for more language, a signifier, or a listen.

Chapter 1 - William Carleton

In this chapter I first discuss two stories from *Traits and Stories of the Irish Peasantry* (TSIP), *Going to Maynooth* and *Phelim O'Toole's Courtship*,¹ which both concern the personal histories of favoured sons. Carleton himself was a favoured son and had with his father what was an abiding and intense relationship:

The love I bore him was a rare affection even from a son to a father. I was his idol, not merely the child of his affection, but of his worship.

(Carleton 1968: 66)

In *Going to Maynooth* there is an intense, formal, and narcissistic relation between father and son encouraging and inflating the son's excellencies so as the son shall be accepted for Maynooth seminary. In *Phelim O'Toole's Courtship* by contrast, Phelim and his father Larry are as likely to have

got drunk, jugged each other, despised all mankind, and staggered home, ragged and merry, poor and hearty, their arms about each other's necks, perfect models of filial duty, and paternal affection. (Carleton 2002b: 243)

Placed side by side in TSIP, the two models of filial duty implicitly invite comparison. In the third tale, *The Black Doctor* (1861),² Tony Johnson is an orphan engaged in a search for a 'good father', but Tony's search has no model of filial duty, a lack interpreted as a reality after the Famine, and indeed, *The Black Doctor*, I argue, may readily be interpreted as the final, bitter instalment of Carleton's Famine tale, *The Black Prophet* (1846).

Carleton's *Going to Maynooth* concerns the very exclusive relation between a father and son, both named Denis O'Shaughnessy. In private, the spoiled and over-promoted young Denis O'Shaughnessy is permitted by his father to be "sirred" and to receive lordly

¹ The first two-volume series of TSIP appeared in 1830, and a second, three-volume series in 1833. Carleton's decision to publish in Dublin with William Curry and then Wakeman was exceptional - work by Irish authors was generally published from London. By becoming huge successes, Carleton's stories were instrumental in securing at least for a short time a publishing industry based in Ireland - "parallel with this reawakening of Irish publishing came the new life in Irish periodicals." (Hayley 1983: 361) All references here to *Traits and Stories of the Irish Peasantry* are from the two volume 'Definitive' edition first published in 1842-1844 by Curry, republished by Colin Smythe Limited in 1990.

² *The Black Doctor*, originally published in series in *The Illustrated Dublin Journal*, is not listed in Barbara Hayley's *Bibliography of the Writings of William Carleton* (1985). I would like to thank Mrs Mairead Maume and then Paddy Lyons at Glasgow University for bringing it to my attention.

treatment around the dinner table - "he'll ate no longer widout a knife and fork", the father announces in happy astonishment to his wife. (Carleton 2002b: 114, 115) Denis's siblings grudgingly permit his encroaching paternal authority over them all - all notion of sibling equality is sacrificed for Denis's advancement. Denis alone may "demand to occupy the place of power, as any totalitarian representative might do" (Lefort 1986: 21), and the family home is transformed into Denis's private rehearsal space for empowering and engrossing his ego. In public debates with his son, the father gladly directs his own 'defeats' to build the son's confidence.

The father's pride, on these occasions, always prompted him to become the aggressor; but he only did this to draw out the talents of his son to more advantage. (Carleton 2002b: 106)

The father continually finds ways in public to bolster young Denis's confidence.

Among the villagers, Denis is an amusing if aggressive sort of bore. Instructing Phadrick Murray, old Denis says, "Phadrick, listen, but keep your tongue saying nothin'; jist lave us to ourselves." (Carleton 2002b: 99) Young Denis then proves to Phadrick Murray that black is white, in order "to *probe* Phadrick here to be an *ass*." (Carleton 2002b: 101, italics in original). Alluding to *The Tempest*, Phadrick is clearly bored with young Denis when old Denis repeatedly has to shout "Phadrick" to call Phadrick to attention and keep listening to Denis's strenuous disquisition, just as in Act I of Shakespeare's play Prospero must repeatedly prompt Miranda to keep listening. Phadrick and Miranda are bored of their dull, self-important patriarchs. Phadrick, being a gentle, good-humoured person, obliges and duly supplies the (colonial) affirmation young Denis and old Denis crave: "oh, that I may never, but he bates the globe". (Carleton 2002b: 99-104) Speaking to Tom Reilly, Denis "complimented him with the loan of a cut on the head... I bruised a few Greek roots and laid them to his *caput* so nate, that you'd laugh to see him." (Carleton 2002b: 100) If this is a form of recreational violence using language, these are unfair fights designed to end in 'humiliation' for Denis's opponents. At their most aggressive, the father-directed fantasy contests have Denis take off the head of the opponent:

Whenever his father considered a display of the son's powers in controversy to be *capital*, Denis, who knew the *molliia tempora fandi*, applied to him for a hat. (Carleton 2002b: 105, italics in original)

In Denis's discourse with the villagers, "To know is to kill." (Serres 1979: 276)

Yet how different it is with young Denis and other authority figures, especially with priests - "his high opinion and awe of the clerical character, kept him remarkably dull and sheepish. Many an excellent joke was cracked at his expense..." (Carleton 2002b: 166) At an interview with the Bishop for assessing his suitability for Maynooth, Denis is utterly timid and maintains the Bishop had "an eye like a *bastleus*", or that which can kill with a look. (Carleton 2002b: 154) Denis reports afterwards to his family how the Bishop "on finding some defect in my responsive powers... looked keenly at me, and inquired upon what ground I had presented myself as a candidate". (Carleton 2002b: 154) With his craven brand of compulsory honesty before superior authority, Denis reveals to the Bishop the bribe of a colt worth twenty-five guineas to Father Finnerty, who had written the letter of recommendation commending Denis to the Bishop. Whenever Denis is imaginatively blocked by an unsympathetic authority figure from accessing the position of the father, his ego badly deflates.

With a forward sort of woman, Denis once more comes unstuck.³ Miss Norah, after Denis tries to inveigle a kiss, teases Denis with threats of telling "a fine story agin you, please goodness!" (Carleton 2002b: 109) Norah then wittily extracts a promise from Denis that once a priest, he will conduct her marriage without fee, and she parts from him teasing, "You're a fool, Misther O'Shaughnessy! Why didn't you should take the kiss, an' spare the king's English?" (Carleton 2002b: 110) Norah perceives easily enough his mixture of "gallantry and timidity", but the timidity is disguised by a command of language acting as 'defensive flesh' over a timid body. In accord with this idea of language as flesh, Barbara Hayley describes *Going to Maynooth* as a tale about language, one where "Denis's language *is* Denis". (1983: 109, italics in original) Barry Sloan, who is more lenient with Denis, writes how

his high-falutin' language, ponderously worded expressions of emotion and justifications of his flirtatious behaviour reveal that the role into which he is

³ Carleton's depiction of womanhood was noted in contemporary reviews. The reviewer for the British literary journal *New Monthly Magazine* commented that, "The only thing our author fails in, is the delineation of female character"; he knows little of its intricacies, and appears 'almost incapable of appreciating the nature and delicacy of woman's mind or woman's tenderness...' (cited Hayley 1983: 377-378) Whereas the reviewer in the Dublin-based *University Review and Quarterly* took the view, "there is no one who can give more exquisite pictures of the female character, when as mothers, wives, or sisters, they are brought forth to show how women... can act and suffer." (cited Hayley 1983: 381) The divergence demonstrates how Irish writers wrote in ways which would "reject the domestication of sexuality in ways that disrupt and depose the conventions of realist fiction." (Kilfeather 1997: 85)

trying to sustain himself is unnatural and increasingly difficult for him to sustain.
(Sloan 1986: 157)⁴

In Denis there is a profound fiction of an identification with language, but rather than language per se (characterised by desire and lack), instead it is knowledge and mastery which are preferred and validated, and anything short of knowledge and mastery is 'tragedy', meaning the failure to grow a local position of the father.

This becomes clear in the 'tragic' antics of Denis's sister and mother when he fails after the inauspicious interview with the Bishop to obtain immediate entry to Maynooth.⁵ If Denis's learned language is meant as a defence, and even, as Barbara Hayley suggests, a defence of his being, often it is a distasteful exercise in fantasy aggression (indulged by kind-hearted villagers), designed to make them redden and stumble. The position of the father for Denis comes at the expense of humiliating or trying to humiliate others. Denis, if at times engaging, has been utterly spoiled into thinking that by his 'natural' intellectual accoutrements, the position of the father is his right, instead of a gift in the gift of the community.

In *Phelim O'Toole's Courtship*, Carleton describes how faction fights may begin with a challenge or 'wheel' before the opposing side, when "the opposite side is simply, and often very good humouredly, invited to assert that 'black is the white of my enemy's eye'". (Carleton 2002b: 195) Carleton describing Denis's lecture to Phadrick on black and white is alluding to a different kind of faction fight, a singular one-against-all faction fight constructed around classical learning, an obviously unfair fight loaded against those without a classical education. This is a bourgeois brand of faction fighting, one which will come to dominate society more and more with the coming extension of organised, disciplined and prize-bound, education. Denis's bombastic aggression is only a liberal-Catholic, 'superior' version of faction fighting, one inspired by scholastic prize-winning.⁶

⁴ Sloan maintains Denis is the "focal point for an entire community", giving Denis's "tale the particular richness which makes it greater than, say, *Phelim O'Toole's Courtship*." (Sloan 1986: 159) I would disagree - for instance, Sloan considers that Phadrick is actually in "awe" of Denis. (Sloan 1986: 156) Phadrick is clearly faking.

⁵ A ridiculous sense of tragedy is another opiate of the people so far as people aspire to mastery. When Denis is first rejected for Maynooth, the "effect which this disclosure produced upon the company present, *especially upon his own family*, utterly defies description... The mother and sisters of Denis were now drowned in tears; and the grief of his sister Susan was *absolutely hysterical*." (Carleton 2002b: 152, italics mine) The italics point to Carleton's wry humour over the 'tragedy' of the situation of the 'hysterical family' desperate for a master among them.

⁶ In this regard, James Joyce would become Ireland's greatest faction fighter.

One pardonable reason for such ridiculous and aggressive behaviour is a profound fear of ignorance and humiliation, especially emanating from the father. The father avers how the son is,

... as manly as any thing, and as long-headed as a four-footed baste, so he is!
Nothing daunts or dashes him, or puts him to an amplash; but he'll look you in
the face so stout and so cute, an' never redden or stumble...

(Carleton 2002b: 98)

Later he asks the son, "why would you blush at *my* ignorance." (Carleton 2002b: 99, italics in original) Yet Denis is not simply a bombastic buffoon, but someone who plays with the deepest feelings of others.

Though publicly promised to the priesthood, Denis in secret conducts a romance with apparently a simpering sort of girl, Susan, the daughter of a poor neighbour, Owen Connell. Denis and Susan have even made a hand-promise of marriage between them, but wishing to enjoy every attention, Denis continues to seduce Susan while planning on being "one of the brightest Colossuses of [the Church's] future glory," at which thought his "ambition, with its train of shadowy honours, would immediately present itself, and Susan was again forgotten". (Carleton 2002b: 127, 130) Then, after breaking this serious commitment, Denis is "inspired with pity for the fair artless girl whom he had so unfeelingly insulted", telling Susan to take up with another man. (Carleton 2002b: 169) However, after being rejected by Denis, Susan immediately announces a vocation of her own with a mania similar to Denis's own: "Queen of glory, pity me! ... I feel her power on me now! ... Yes, Denis, her glory is upon me". (Carleton 2002b: 178-9) However, Denis's vocation shifts abruptly after the death of his father, with Denis abandoning Maynooth and threatening how if he remained at the seminary he would "soon *folly* his father". (Carleton 2002b: 186, italics mine)

Faix, he was as *stiff* as they wor stout, an' wouldn't give in; so, afther ever so much wranglin', he got the upper hand... [threatening how if he remained in Maynooth] he'd soon *folly* his father. (Carleton 2002b: 186, italics mine)

Not until death does them part can Denis revert to the desire in his own body. The child who follows his father's desires so much is a deadly 'folly', as 'stiff' as a corpse.

However, after his father's death, Denis returns to the village and marries Susan, who gives up her own promise of virginity dedicated to the Virgin Mary. The point to note is how Susan's desire always follows Denis's desire, in their romance and in their short-lived

vocations, and Denis's desire in turn follows his father's desire, in a pyramid of desire trickling down from the position of the father. Chains of signification reach up to the position of the father - only with the death of his father does Denis gain permission for his own desire to be realised and till then, Denis simply had embodied the desire of his father.

What is also clear is the fragility as well as the centrality of the position of the father - its social construction is obvious, even if to young and old Denis they seem the authors of their own position. There is the uncritical sustenance the position of the father requires from everyone's obedience - desire does lead back in a *chain* to a father figure. This madness or "folly" - the structure of desire centred on the position of the father - is, in Carleton's pun, a ludicrous, vainglorious piece of architecture. The "folly" is also how young Denis in the position-as-child is not protected by the position of the father, but rather the entire opposite, how the position-as-child is made for protecting the father. One neighbour comments how old Denis is "never dead while young Denis is livin'", and clearly the life and position of the father is crucial. (Carleton 2002b: 186)

The psychoanalytic approach would label father and son obsessional neurotics, each heaving with an anxiety ridden association operating between death and the position of the father - young Denis acts as if not following his father's will would be to kill the father. The obsessional neurotic for a relief strategy often will "grant someone the authority they themselves lack and apply to him with a request for knowledge". (Nobus 2000: 33) The son, with his ragbag of knowledge and confirmation as a priest, will function as a prop for assuaging the father's neurosis. The obsessional neurotic's attitude to the Other is of a complex, passive aggressive nature, just such as the ferocious complacency in the behaviour of Denis O'Shaughnessy towards fellow villagers. The obsessional neurotic relates to the Other as an unknown Other rendering him passive in the face of his ignorance, while the Other has *too much desire*, making the obsessional neurotic impotent in the face of his own comparative lack of desire, and Susan very adroitly behaves in a demure and shy fashion towards Denis, screening her own desires.⁷ Ultimately, the core condition of an obsessive neurotic is to "refuse to acknowledge that the Other has curtailed his enjoyment". (Nobus 2000: 33) Or else, the obsessional neurotic is the subject with

⁷ Susan is still more like Nora than Denis can fathom. When Denis reveals he is abandoning her to go to Maynooth, "a strong hysteric sense of suffocation rose to her throat; she panted rapidly for breath; Denis opened his arms, and she fell, *or rather threw herself*, over in a swoon upon his bosom." (Carleton 2002b: 180, italics mine) Susan has been acting the demure maid so as to encourage her swain.

troubled access to the Law of the Father, and the never acknowledged Other in *Going to Maynooth* is an English, colonial Other.

In contrast to *Phelim O'Toole's Courtship* (to emphasise again, which adjoins *Going to Maynooth* in *TSIP*), Ribbonism or any felt presence of English force is conspicuously absent in *Going to Maynooth*. Versus Phelim decrying "gaols, judges, and assizes", *Going to Maynooth* is about going politically quiet. (Carleton 2002b: 253) For all young Denis O'Shaughnessy's supposed powers of being a "controversialist", Denis is a controversialist whose controversies designedly avoid mention of any English presence or any political discussion. (Carleton 2002b: 107) Like St. Augustine, Denis longs for clear, unproblematic relationships, freed ideally from political and sexual conflicts.

Maynooth seminary was a solution eminently designed for ambitious, "hard young carecrists" such as Denis O'Shaughnessy, with social relations ordered, as Augustine's original bishopric, for the sublimation of sexuality on an idealised master-servant axis. (Brown 1988: 388, 390) The containment of political resistance along a Catholic, master-servant axis co-opted a political quietism and quietus, maintaining English rule by repeating the master-servant axis in Catholic dress.⁸ The earnestness among the O'Shaughnessy family for young Denis's progress is deeply ambivalent in the sense it is set against the rule of, as well as well on behalf of, an English Other. Denis opines like an imperious tribunal how,

I can conciliate by love as readily as I can impress them by fear; for, you see, *divide et imperia* is as aptly applied to the passions as to maxims of state policy - ehem. I then go to my tribunal... (Carleton 2002b: 138)

Denis also, as Norah teased him, shows off with the "King's English", and at Maynooth seminary, as Carleton explains in a footnote, Denis undertakes the so-called Retreat,

half a meal a day for the first week, fasting tightly against the grain, praying sincerely for a set-in at the *king's mutton*, and repenting thoroughly of his penitence. (Carleton 2002b: 155, italics mine)

⁸ The infamous retreat of O'Connell at the prospect of bloody confrontation during the 'monster meeting' at Clontarf in 1843 - "human blood is no cement for the temple of liberty" - was the epitome of going quiet. (cited Ellis 1996: 109) As Ellis points out, pacifism in O'Connell was missing when he turned out to fight Robert Emmet's insurgents in 1803, or in how O'Connell "encouraged his son in recruiting for Irish volunteers to defend the Papal state against invasion from the Piedmontese." (Ellis 1996: 110)

The Catholic hierarchy both symbolically and materially volunteered starvation as a sacred discipline, but one awaiting the English "king's mutton" at the end of the fast, in an aristocratic accommodation between Catholic and English hierarchies.⁹ This spiritual purification through fasting, amid regular famine, is patently distasteful to Carleton.¹⁰

The role of an expensive colt in the 'horse-trading' over whether or not Denis is to go to Maynooth carries further historical associations. Owning a colt valued at twenty-five guineas was prescribed for Catholics by the Penal Laws (the limit on a horse's value being five pounds).¹¹ The Penal laws had been relaxed by the time of Carleton writing in the 1830s (in the Catholic Relief Acts of 1771, 1778 and 1793), but for the O'Shaughnessy father to *offer up* such a very valuable animal to Father Finnerty is a sign the family is anxious still to transcend Penal Laws which labelled Papists as uncivilised - the priest is playing on those anxieties in the present.

In *Going to Maynooth* the conversion process from savage to civil society is effected by the agency of the priest, such as the processional ceremony of gifts brought to Denis before he leaves for Maynooth. The bribe of the colt to the experienced priest becomes a superior offering, transacted further up the civilising hierarchy. In a traumatised population accused of savagery, material exchanges under the imprimatur of the priest acquired the magic of civility, and the role of the Catholic priesthood in a 'civilising process' in the nineteenth century has been widely described (Inglis 1998; Miller 1975; Connolly 1982; Larkin 1972). Catholic priests benefited directly in bribes, or more commonly and perhaps with greater effect, benefited indirectly by acting as middlemen. Consequently, the priesthood became a nexus of capitalist expansion. A letter in 1843 from T. Chisholme Anstey, written to a Secretary in the Catholic Curia in Rome, advises him how,

⁹ The relation of the Catholic Hierarchy to English rule is complex, but up to the Plan of Campaign of 1886-1888, fairly salutary in its accommodation. The Vatican's desire was for diplomatic relations to resume with England, but spearheading the collective refusal of Irish Bishops to condemn at Rome's behest the Plan of Campaign, Archbishops Croke and Walsh, partly in order to stymie worse agrarian unrest, effectively consolidated the Clerical-Nationalist alliance that would finally dominate Irish politics for the next century. (Larkin 1978: 47-48, 312)

¹⁰ The Great Famine had not yet taken place but famine was a rolling problem, including 14 partial and complete famines between 1816 and 1845. "Ominous warnings of coming catastrophe were sounded in 1817, 1822, 1831, 1835 and 1839, when partial and local failures gave rise to distress and in some instances, to actual deaths from starvation." (Cousens 1960: 55)

¹¹ This particular Penal Law dated from 1695. Section 10 stated, "No Papist shall be capable of having or keeping for his use, any horse, gelding or mare of five pounds value." The act was made "for the better securing the government, by disarming papists". A fine horse in Papist hands presented a military threat. Horses owned by Catholics in the late, medieval period were often seized by Anglo-militias.

it is a vulgar and proverbial saying throughout Ireland that the best or richest matches are to be had with the kindred of priests and that their farms are certain to be well stocked and furnished. (cited Larkin 1972: 634)

The best possible interpretation of the ambitions of the O'Shaughnessy family would draw out the possibility of the family having internalised an historical, colonial trauma, repeated now in a drama of loss and fantasy decapitation signifying a fear of losing the position of the father. Yet it is also true how the family mediates the authority of the English Other, taking the King's language and mutton into their mouths with some relish. Denis wearing gaudy, imported clothes is the desire and action through which Denis symbolically locates himself in the gaze of an aristocracy adoring, English Other.

Further, shirts symbolising the land is a theme developed and used again in *Phelim O'Toole's Courtship*. Phelim's

dun-coloured shirt...resembled a noun-substantive, for it could stand alone... when disenshirting at night, he usually laid it standing at his bedside where it reminded one of frosted linen in everything but whiteness.

(Carleton 2002b: 196)

Versus Denis's soft fabrics, Phelim O'Toole's dun-coloured shirt standing alone and stiff with frosted linen is a motif of Irish independence. It is also unique in *TSIP* to hear the phrasing, "it reminded one...". Carleton is parodying an English voice making deprecations of Irish dress, and by analogy, Irish independence.

The character 'Fool Art' in *Phelim O'Toole's Courtship* takes a shirt belonging to the local Squire and leaves one of his own in its place, claiming a "fair exchange is no robbery". (Carleton 2002b: 244) The Squire's good shirt is the good land stolen and expropriated by the coloniser, but when this shirt / land is stolen back by Fool Art, the Squire has found a stereotype who will not take responsibility for the theft. Art stealing the Squire's shirt provokes the colonial law (the all-seeing Squire sees the shirt being stolen), and the Squire gives Fool Art a letter for the bearer of the letter to be seized and gaoled.

Fool Art is delighted to run errands for the local Squire, receiving "a half crown for [his] trouble" – a pun on Fool Art's aristocratic ambitions. (Carleton 2002b: 244) Fool Art is also alienated from his native culture and land, and quite clearly is drawn like Hamlet. In Larry Donovan's house, while everyone else is enjoying a good time together, Fool Art

sat in that wild abstraction which characterises the unhappy class to which he belonged. He muttered to himself, laughed - or rather chuckled - shrugged his shoulders, and appeared to be as unconscious of what had taken place as an automaton. (Carleton 2002b: 250)

At the shindig, Fool Art gives the letter to Phelim to deliver, for a crown in payment (the symbolism of 'capital' heads and crown goes on). When Phelim then delivers the letter he is arrested, after being recognised by a gaoler familiar with Phelim's provision of alibis for Ribbonmen, and then is interned and sentenced on evidence garnered from Foodle Flattery, a man of "indifferent morals". (Carleton 2002b: 253) The gaolers knew well to "work upon" the fears of Foodle, with how Phelim is ready to capitulate and betray Foodle, in order to garner Foodle's evidence against Phelim. (Carleton 2002b: 253-4) Thus, the prisoner's dilemma is used to frame Phelim, who is sentenced on the hearsay of Foodle,¹² and Foodle is later shot by the Ribbonmen, while Phelim's titular 'courtship' ironically ends on a transportation ship.¹³

By Fool Art's use of the letter to transfer punishment and legal redress to Phelim, there are clearly further comparisons to be drawn between Fool Art and Hamlet, as in Hamlet's treatment of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. Fool Art has both the melancholy interiority of Hamlet, as well as a similar alienation transferred in the agency of the letter - Hamlet lets Rosencrantz and Guildenstern suffer the Law he affects to despise, and yet upholds.

Interestingly, Carleton writes how Fool Art acts like an "automaton", or a person under an impulse without principle (as Carleton characterizes the criminals of *The Three Jolly Travellers*). Fool Art was an automaton transfixed by the Squire's image, such as his stealing of the Squire's shirts, and Carleton could hardly be more political in calling such

¹² The three-year operative Insurrection Acts of 1796 and 1799 empowered "any two magistrates to transport without trial by jury persons out at night or *thought guilty of offences*" (Shaw 1966: 169, 170, italics mine). The Insurrection Act of 1807 lapsed in 1810 with no areas proclaimed in insurrection. However, unrest broke out in Tipperary in 1811, with the partial failure of the potato crop. Likewise, following Famine, from 1822 to 1825 the Insurrectionary Acts were in force again, but between 1825 and 1830, agrarian violence lulled entirely - "with the means of paying rents appears to have returned the disposition to do so", according to one policeman in 1824. (Shaw 1966: 179)

¹³ About 30,000 men and 9,000 women were transported from Ireland, about a quarter of the total transported (a ratio less than the third the Irish comprised of the total UK population at the time). However, "a quarter of all the Irish transported were women, or twice the proportion of British convicts." (Shaw 1966: 183) Many of those transported after the rebellion of 1798 were complained of, for being "bred up in genteel life or to professions unaccustomed to [the] hard labour" expected of them in Australia. (Shaw 1966: 168) Those transported later tended to come from the lower orders of society, such as Phelim.

people an "unhappy class".¹⁴ Fool Art imitates both the coloniser's dress and bad conscience by passing on the blame of the shirt theft to Phelim, who then becomes the scapegoat.¹⁵ This has the effect of occluding the coloniser's original crimes, with Phelim as scapegoat suiting both Fool Art *and* the Squire. If Fool Art subsequently turns against the Squire, he still must go to see the Squire to prove to the Squire he is still at large: "With *great simplicity*, he presented himself at the Big House". (Carleton 2002b: 254) This is the "great simplicity" and action of a collaborator or slave bound by a desire to be seen by the master whose position is left unchanged, and whose slave is left 'free'. This name, 'Fool Art', is possibly even a reference to Shakespeare's play, *King John* (1623):

Thou little valiant, great in villainy!
 Thou ever strong upon the stronger side!
 Thou Fortune's champion that dost never fight
 But when her humorous ladyship is by
 To teach thee safety! thou art perjured too,
 And soothest up greatness. What a fool art thou,
 A ramping fool, to brag and stamp and swear
 Upon my party! Thou cold-blooded slave...
 Thou wear a lion's hide! doff it for shame,
 And hang a calf's-skin on those recreant limbs.
(3.1: 42-49, 54-55)

The lion's hide is the Squire's shirt.¹⁶ The illustration coming at the end of the *Phelim O'Toole's Courtship* makes all the more obvious and invidious the political transaction between an obsequious Fool Art, looking exactly like a 'little' villain trying to join the stronger side, and the treacherous Squire, shown giving Fool Art the letter which is to imprison Fool Art, the letter which will redound on Phelim. Billowing in the background are shirts drying on a clothes-line, and this drawing does clearly emphasise the analogy of shirts with land. In the cabal between Fool Art and the Squire, Phelim has fallen into a trap

¹⁴ An unhappy class like the gang of criminals hypnotised by Foster in *The Black Doctor*, discussed further on.

¹⁵ The analogy of shirts and land continues at the beginning of *The Poor Scholar*, the tale following *Phelim O'Toole's Courtship* in *TSIP*. Dominick McEvoy rails against the "black thieves" who stole the "rich and warm-looking" sheltered inland, all to leave himself a "thievin' bent" of land upon which he must "toil till [his] fingers are worn" in order to grow a "poor *sthring* o' praties". (Carleton 2002b: 257, italics mine) Carleton describes how, though the "day was bitter and wintry, the men were thinly clad". (Carleton 2002b: 257) The similarity between a string of potatoes and the thinly clad men is poetic, but painful.

¹⁶ Lions rampant were part of English heraldry since the medieval period, and particularly are associated with the Crusades. In 1185, John, the son of King Henry I, lead an expedition to Ireland, and "once John had established himself, Henry intended that he should become king of Ireland, and to that end had approached the pope about providing him with a crown." (Frame 1981: 20)

between the representative of colonial power and that power's competitive mimic.¹⁷
Shakespeare's play ends with the Bastard's boast,

This England never did, nor never shall,
Lie at the proud foot of a conqueror
But when it first did help to wound itself. (5.7: 112-115)

Fool Art is just such an Irish wound. Whatever sympathies Phelim has with the Ribbonmen - Carleton elides details, though when his mother Sheelah asks him about being out one night, and says, "I hope it wasn't *out* you wor", Ribbon activities are implied (Carleton 2002b: 237) - now Phelim serves as the law's scapegoat. Phelim's transportation will make the circuit of blame a perfect parable of the colonial whitewashing of history ending in transportation for those who would resist such colonial impositions as Phelim rails against: "gaols, judges, and assizes". (Carleton 2002b: 253) Phelim, unlike Denis O'Shaughnessy, does not go quietly in the end. When Carleton finally at the end tells his readers how he has kept "Phelim's Ribbonism in the background, because its details could only excite aversion" (Carleton 2002b: 256), a question arises, over how much of Carleton's own political sympathies are written between the lines of *Phelim O'Toole's Courtship*?

What can be known is that between the defeat of the United Irishmen in 1798 and the emergence of the Young Ireland movement in the 1840s, political agitation in Ireland was largely confined to rural areas such as Clogher, where Carleton grew up in County Tyrone. Lower class nationalism expressed itself in various secret, agrarian societies collectively labelled "Ribbonism" by Protestants fearful of, though willing to raise and exaggerate, the spectre of nationwide insurrection. (Beames 1982: 128) The borderland between Protestant Ulster and Catholic Ireland where Carleton was raised was a 'shatterbelt' of the conflict, an area "historically more extensive than the present day Northern Ireland frontier... Ribbonmen were strongest in this wide belt of territory" (Garvin 1981: 10-11). Carleton's autobiography tells how around Clogher "the whole Catholic population, with the exception of aged heads of families, was affiliated to Ribbonism". (Carleton 1968: 78) Indeed, after his family was evicted in 1813, Carleton did join the Ribbonmen.¹⁸ This

¹⁷ Compare Parnell's downfall, destroyed by the letter of judgement passed on by the Catholic Church, Michael Collin's assassination by doctrinaire Republicans another. The method for trapping one dissenting voice between two similar voices is explored in Chapter 4, for Yeats' play, *The Land of Heart's Desire* (1894).

¹⁸ Carleton's autobiography says how "it was not only impossible, but dangerous, to avoid being involved in the system." (Carleton 1968: 78) Carleton claims to have taken "plenty of excellent poteen whisky" just before taking the oath, in what is clearly a highly fictional account of proceedings. (Carleton 1968: 76) The eviction is not mentioned in the Autobiography, though the chapter before the one containing the oath tells of his father's death, and the "consequences

shatterbelt fits the political landscape of *Phelim O'Toole's Courtship*, a very different political landscape, at least in political activity, than in *Going to Maynooth*.

Life within the O'Toole family is very different in outlook from the O'Shaughnessy family, a fact made obvious from the first by comparing the dry, dull opening of *Going to Maynooth* with the jaunty opening of *Phelim O'Toole's Courtship*;

Young Denis O'Shaughnessy was old Denis's son; and old Denis, like many great men before him, was the son of his father and mother in particular, and of a long line of respectable ancestors in general. (Carleton 2002b: 97)¹⁹

Phelim O'Toole, who had the honour of being that interesting person-age, an only son, was heir to a snug estate of half an acre, which had been the family patrimony since the time of his grandfather, Tyrell O'Toole, won it from the *Sassenah* at the point of his reaping hook, during a descent made upon England by a body of 'spalpeens', in the month of August." (Carleton 2002b: 188)²⁰

Foreign places reached by 'descent', strangers called '*Sassenah*', 'spalpeens' as well as reaping hooks working in contest, all persuade the reader that here by contrast with Denis O'Shaughnessy is an individual, Phelim, who has arrived in history from other interesting individuals. Though Larry O'Toole, like old Denis O'Shaughnessy, is keen to leave a legacy (the much vaunted half-acre), beyond the half-acre they own, Phelim has every freedom to explore the world for himself. From an early age there is a difference in the sociability of the two sons - Phelim as a child wanders all over the locality discovering his own desires and likes, independent of his father. Instead of the O'Shaughnessy's domestic stage, which is a secret theatre of 'beheaded' proto-middle-class fathers, Phelim ranges over the entire land, which is a secret theatre of Ribbonism and 'beheaded' nationalism. One family internalises in private anxiety, what is public, yet secret and political, for the other.

Even after his recovery from smallpox (Denis would assuredly be cosseted in bed for months), Phelim "was seldom now at home, except during meal times; for wherever fun or novelty was to be found, Phelim was present." (Carleton 2002b: 203) As a gift after

of decline." (Carleton 1968: 57) The resultant impoverishment from his father's death would have been reason for the eviction.

¹⁹ This baleful seriality in father-son relationships will be treated in more depth in Chapter 6 on Brian Friel, particularly *Philadelphia, Here I Come!*

²⁰ Owen Roe O'Neill was one of the Catholic Gentry in the so-called Flight of the Earls in 1607, and Phelim O'Neill was an Irish nobleman who led the Irish Rebellion of 1641. Thus, Phelim O'Neill by name has interesting historical connotations over Irish freedom, and Irish failures.

recovering from smallpox, Phelim gets outfitted in "leather crackers", or new trousers, and proceeds round the neighbours to show them off:

"Ay", observed the mother, "an' how the crathur went round among all the neighbours to show them the 'leather crackers!' To see his little pride out o' the hare-skin cap, too, wid the hare's ears stickin' out of his temples. That an' the droopin' eye undher them, makes him look so cunnin' and genteel, that one can't help having their heart fixed upon him. (Carleton 2002b: 203)

While Phelim's new clothes are a gift made in thanks for his surviving smallpox, Denis's new clothes are gifts made in thanks for winning 'rigged' debating contests. While Phelim takes open pleasure in taking pleasure from other people, such as stealing fruit from the neighbours, Denis thinks and considers he can stealthily take pleasure from his audiences with the brilliance of his intellectual accoutrements - Denis foolishly believes his audiences are in admiring earnest. While Denis quails before the bishop, Phelim provides alibis with ease for Ribbonmen at the assizes. Phelim

works wonders... born for that especial purpose... had a design in not being believed... no risk of a lawyer getting the truth... afflicted by convenient maladies. (Carleton 2002b: 207)

Phelim, in contrast to Denis with the Bishop, seems immune to the blandishments and threats of patriarchal authority, and as for education, Phelim permanently absconds. With physical fighting, Denis O'Shaughnessy abjures the notion, while "Phelim, being every person's friend, by his good nature, was nobody's foe, except for the day." (Carleton 2002b: 207) There is no lasting enmity after Phelim's brand of fighting – his is a recreational violence quick to begin in anger, and ideally, to finish in friendship.²¹

While the O'Shaughnessy family is anxious of being judged by their neighbours, the neighbours neither punish Phelim for stealing fruit, nor punish Larry and Sheelah O'Toole for failing to punish the child. "'Take a sthraw to him, like Sheelah O'Toole,' was often ironically said to mothers remarkable for mischievous indulgence to their children."

²¹ Conley notes how in the nineteenth century, "Expressions of concern over recreational violence usually had less to do with the injuries inflicted than with the image projected." (Conley 1999: 67) However, in Conley's study of crime rates, "even at its worst the level of violence in Ireland was less than that in England. Further, recreational violence usually involved consenting parties... However ludicrous and barbaric a faction fight might seem to outsiders, recreational violence with willing participants compares favourably to the institutionalized violence of imperialism or to random attacks of political terrorism." (Conley 1999: 67) See also Conley (1990) for a more extensive discussion.

(Carleton 2002b: 200) Instead, the neighbours ironise their indulgence of the child, as well as the parents.²²

Another important difference is the attitude to death - Phelim and death is a different prospect to Denis and death. In *Going to Maynooth*, the death of Denis the father is passed over in the narrative, while Denis's failure to get into Maynooth produced a torrent of tears from his sister and mother. Knowledge, mastery and language have overtaken life in the narrative of *Going to Maynooth* - as Barbara Hayley suggests, language *is* life for Denis - and then death has been strictly privatized. In *Phelim O'Toole's Courtship*, the local girls consider a wake "truly a scene of sorrow, if [Phelim] did not happen to be present". (Carleton 2002b: 206) "No wake, for instance, could escape him." (Carleton 2002b: 203) Phelim is like a mythic child who escapes the law (unpunished for stealing fruit, or seriously assaulting a teacher), and from whom death, in the form of wakes, cannot escape. The escape from law is in gift of the community, while the escape from death is through pleasure - Phelim recovers from smallpox with his first taste of poteen, and attends wakes for more of the same. In absolute opposition to Denis, Phelim in the position of the child is permitted to trammel the law and attend on death with pleasure and glee, all in public.

If Phelim resembles Pan (the Greek god of shepherds and flocks, of mountain wilds, hunting and rustic music), Phelim does still pay attention to social norms, but these social norms are discovered from Phelim's own understanding. Young Phelim lies about the 'baccagh', a cripple whom Phelim tells his parents saved Phelim when Phelim had tramped on deadly 'hungry grass' and lay dying. (Carleton 2002b: 199) This hungry grass and *baccagh* are a myth Phelim has not quite understood yet - the myth this time is useful as an excuse for Phelim playing and not returning home in time for dinner. However, falling ill to smallpox and being close to death - the neighbours all try and provide a share of the cure - finally teaches Phelim the truth of the myth, that people depend for survival on good will from neighbours, indeed how people *are* all cripples without neighbours. After the smallpox illness and visiting the neighbours to show off the leather crackers, Phelim's stealing stops. Moral lessons are not forced on the child in an overt, disciplinary

²² Those who fail to punish offenders are not themselves automatically punished. The situation with Phelim's parents is a refutation of the punishment meted out to Lot's wife. A study by economists and anthropologists suggests such a rule - those who fail to punish 'cheats' are themselves punished - is necessary for strong group co-operation to succeed in groups of many hundreds. (Buchanan 2005: 37) One historical context for the development of such a rule of co-operation would be large, standing, military armies and bureaucracies. The requirement to co-ordinate such large groups with absolute discretion and discipline, in an hierarchical structure, would be one historical impetus for the rise of a father-occluded Imaginary with a god-gaze at its apex.

and pedagogical fashion – the child's intimation of moral norms rests with the child's own ways and in the child's own time. As the father says of the poor scholar leaving home – “Let the child get fair play, and thry his coorse.” (*The Poor Scholar*; Carleton: 2002b: 272) Denis O'Shaughnessy under no circumstances is allowed to try his own course.

Another significant difference between the two tales is how we learn about Phelim's father's relation to his wife, while the reader never discovers anything of the marriage relation between Denis and Mave O'Shaughnessy. The O'Shaughnessy family is private in every matter, except concerning Denis, who becomes their ‘public face’. By contrast, *Phelim O'Toole's Courtship* literally kicks off with a fierce row between Larry and Sheelah. First Larry casts aspersions on Sheelah's face and speech:

You have a hard face; you had better keep a soft tongue in your head; throw the love I once had for you, in my teeth; better for me had I fell in consale wid any face but yours; don't be putting your hands agin your sides, and waggin' your impty head at me; the edge of your tongue's well known; you're bad tongue's all you're good for.
(Carleton 2002b: 189-90)

Then Sheelah pours contempt on a poor sort of pride and manliness in Larry:

I pitch your half acre, man; to be tould that by the likes o' you! ha! It's a manly thing for you to do; Sure the neighbours despises you; an' thin we'd get another husband; I'm the ill-thrated poor baste of a villain, that I never turn my tongue on, barrin' to tell him the kind of man he is, the blackguard.
(Carleton 2002b: 189-90)

Larry is sanguine over Sheelah taunting his manliness, and there is no invocation on Larry's part of any supposed male superiority (Mave O'Shaughnessy and Susan always use family strategies which must remain literally unnarrated). In fact, Larry abjures having the last word most becomingly. Neither is Sheelah enraged afterwards at Larry's taunting of her appearance and manner of speech - Sheelah certainly does not invoke or manipulate female inferiority or sensitivity in her defence. Larry and Sheelah symbolically have beaten each other up, but soon are going about their business “as if nothing had occurred between them.” (Carleton 2002b: 191) The O'Toole marriage is altogether less reverential of the father's position compared to the biological, uniperversity of the position among the O'Shaughnessy family.

Larry plays neither angry father nor wheedling son, and Sheelah acts out no pathetic mother or daughter figure. Sheelah indeed is the one who begins the row, “To the diouol I pitch your half acre, man” (Carleton 2002b: 189), and arbitrates over the (phallic) peace

pipe they exchange at the end. Their fighting and forgetting without need of forgiving is a brand of recreational violence in the domestic sphere. The exchange also performs the work of hysteria affirming a gender to the other. The insults they exchange are all conventional: Larry disparages Sheelah's face, harsh tongue, and body, while Sheelah mocks Larry's cold-hearted pride in the half-acre, along with his manliness. The row mechanics assign gender without a gender bias - each gives as good as the other, shouting at and insulting the other in alternate outbursts of similar length. The voice-as-object is equally shared, and in its own way, this is a well mannered row. Before and after the row it may even be neither Larry nor Sheelah are especially different in gender, in the same way as Peter and Ellish Connell are not especially different in *The Geography of an Irish Oath*. Ellish is "as ready to meet her rivals in business with a blow as a joke", an energy and style Peter enjoys with "unfeigned pleasure". (Carleton 2002b: 23) The position of the father and even gender in each marriage is not at all pre-determined by biology. Sheelah and Ellish occupy the position of the father as much as Larry and Peter – the position floats between them, depending on their cunning.

If there is a great deal of affection, anger, and attachment between Larry and Sheelah, precipitous, 'romantic' love is missing. Barbara Hayley notes in her Preface how Carleton's peasants,

are not romantically picturesque... Their passions are for land, food, drink and possessions, even for knowledge and education, but rarely for love...
(Carleton 2002a: 9)²³

By contrast, young Denis and Susan are intensely, romantically picturesque, meeting one another in a sheltered, secluded spot on a river. Even after the insulting rejection by Denis, Susan eulogises over past encounters, with "birds singing sweetly, [and] the music of the river flowin". (Carleton 2002b: 176) Phelim and his father at hard bargaining and matchmaking, Phelim with his hilarious deceptions to seduce Peggy Donovan, Sally Flattery, and most hilariously, Bridget Doran, the priest's elderly housekeeper, bargaining dowries left, right, and centre, are a world away from the hidden world of old Denis and Mave, and the delicate love foibles of Denis and Susan.

Versus the blocked pieties of romance in *Going to Maynooth*, in *Phelim O'Toole's Courtship*, marriage is openly advised by economics, is less cautionary, less dominated by religious dictates advising sober caution, and more comic. Phelim's proposal to Bridget

²³ Baba, in Edna O'Brien's *The Country Girls Trilogy*, would be one such example of a peasant.

may be at first his own joke, but Bridget brilliantly and hilariously turns the tables on him – she says to Phelim, "God forgive you if you make a bad husband to me." (Carleton 2002b: 216) Phelim splutters, "A bad *what?*" (Carleton 2002b: 216) The priest is angry over losing a good housekeeper, and is more astonished to then receive two further notices of marriage involving Phelim. The farrago between the parish priest and Phelim over 'possession' of Mrs. Doran has an Oedipal flavour, but the priest does not respond with threats or denunciations – he calls Phelim's bluff (like Mrs. Doran), and actually announces at the altar the banns of marriage between Phelim and the three women, to "roars of laughter, which lasted several minutes". (Carleton 2002b: 241) The priest serves Phelim his desire to the letter in a brilliant retort to Phelim's apparent challenge to his own authority, renaming Phelim the 'Pathriak'.

Though this all is announced in Church, Phelim's philandering ways are taken for what they are, an entertainment vehicle for Phelim's fame requiring a good humoured audience to gracefully steer the joke towards harmless local legend, and this is what the village does. Phelim's antics are "spread over the whole parish before the close of that Sunday. Every one had it – man, woman and child." (Carleton 2002b: 242) Children are part of the audience – no child needs shielding from the antics.

The law-giver, the maker of the foundational truth of the Law, is conventionally called the patriarch. In *Phelim O'Toole's Courtship*, Phelim is permitted to act the patriarch as if he can be the (comic) author of a patriarch's position. "Phelim was the author of all, and from him it was precisely what they expected". (2002b: 243) Phelim, in the generative position of the child, playing on its pleasures and myth-making, is loved for his entertainment value, even when parodying the position of the father. This paradise is not frightened of parodies. The village is a willing audience for Phelim as a pretend-patriarch, without ill feeling to Phelim and without shame on themselves, or any threat to the authority of the priest. Fantasy and authority can co-mingle without punishing anyone who parodies or plays at being in the position of the father. Like Denis, Phelim deceives women, but they have their own conspicuous independence of mind and plans of revenge - there are none of Susan's fainting games. Play is openly possible between the child and father positions, another sign of which is how Phelim's parents are not punished. This play between positions is open to any person with imagination, irrespective of their age or even their gender. The priest shall rule in the end, but there shall be play as well. There is a mobility between father and child positions that does not threaten the position of the father - the priest recognizes Phelim and even reconfirms his identity as the inimitable Phelim, in the

comedy at the altar – ultimately, this is the maturity of the audience in *Phelim O'Toole's Courtship*.

By contrast, the audience in Carleton's tale *The Black Doctor* (1861), the regulars of a public house called The Three Jolly Travellers, are all *violently immature* - the suggestibility and violence of the men flows from how the position of the father is missing from their group. The story's 'son' figure, Tony Johnson, is clearly looking for a good father. What is crucial is how Tony is prepared to go *any distance* to establish such a relationship, first with John Brunt, the owner of 'The Three Jolly Travellers', then with Brutus Bramble, "an Ethiopian and a native of Cuba" (Carleton 1861: 98), who became a doctor from the patronage of an English gentleman, and finally with Foster, a middle class gentleman Tony and Brutus help at tremendous risk to themselves. Every character is prepared to gamble everything, up to their lives (death is the penalty for murder), to attain the position of the father as defined by Foster.

The tale this time is urban, set in squalid, slum-ridden Dublin. The setting, tone and style of narration are all radically different from *Going to Maynooth* and *Phelim O'Toole's Courtship*. Patrick Kavanagh in his Preface to Carleton's autobiography praised *TSIP* for its "racy dialogue, which reads like a translation direct from the necessities of nineteenth century Irish life". (Carleton 1968: 9) In *The Black Doctor*, the dialogue is penny dreadful, and the only race is enrichment at any price. All of the conversation in 'The Three Jolly Travellers' concerns crime, but if crime is a promising subject, the voices and dialogue are leaden with clichéd pain and declamations. The narrative is less than engrossing, and the dialogue so stogy as to suggest Carleton is consciously serving up a penny dreadful for a hack's payment, and at the same time satirising Victorian gothic-realism. However, there is more at stake than meets the eye.

The crucial criminal act which sets off all further proceedings is a fraud Mr Foster will commit, staging his wife's fictitious death to access money in her will. In the beginning of the tale, Foster visits 'The Three Jolly Travellers' to find a corrupt scrivener, Barman, in order to abet the fraud.²⁴ This is Foster after making his entrance to The Three Jolly Travellers,

²⁴ In yet another sign of a young man seeking a father figure, Barman's original name was Harrington, but he has taken the new name, Jacob Barman, to appear related to his Jewish employer, Isaac Abrahams, as well as signalling his ambition to become a lawyer at the Bar. Work and wealth are now the dominant terms of recognition, or identity.

... he stood in the light of the fire, evident marks of care and privation on his well-formed face. There was an ease and elegance in his manner and bearing which did not escape the scrutinising eye of Tony, who, perhaps for the first time in his life, called a person, Sir! (Carleton 1861: 82)

In front of Tony Johnson, Foster is lordly and father-like, and Tony acknowledges him with 'Sir!' However, quickly after, Foster's 'ease' and 'elegance' is transformed into anguished, public exclamations lamenting his wife's suffering.

Foster groaned aloud and in a paroxysm of anguish exclaimed, "My poor wife, starving and dying, and I without the means of giving her bread!" as he said this he rose from his seat, and as he walked along the wretched room big tears rolled down his cheeks. (Carleton 1861: 83)

This scene is staged before Barman, who then concocts and takes charge of the fraud on Foster's behalf in which they will stage his wife's death - "we will manage a mock funeral!" (Carleton 1861: 83) All the two require is a corrupt doctor for signing a death certificate, and this turns out to be Brutus Bramble, the negro doctor of the title.

The point which Carleton stresses is how Foster is an accomplished manipulator of his image, and the men in the 'The Three Jolly Travellers' are highly suggestible to Foster's manipulation of his image. This is Foster later on, sitting, waiting in The Three Jolly Travellers,

As he gazed upon the fire he looked as if he was sadly reviewing the past, and he appeared not in the slightest degree to heed the noise and clamour of those around him. He was *a photograph* of abject misery and one who seemed destined to be ever acquainted with misfortune.

(Carleton 1861: 187, italics mine)

How Foster "was a photograph of abject misery" (at the time photograph exposure periods ran into minutes), satirically highlights the concentrated effort of Foster's pose *and* misery. Indeed, Foster is a consummate, Romantically melancholy poseur, enunciating a carefully planned script and carefully controlling a planned image.

Foster is thus drawn by Carleton as a poseur skilled in manipulating a mobility between appearing as a father and child, all for strategically manipulating others. With Tony, he positions himself as a father, and then, with Barman and Brutus Bramble, he positions himself as a child. By this skill in projecting a fantasy and positioning others within the fantasy (or Foster's utilitarian version of mobility), Foster exerts a truly fantastic level of

control over the retinue of criminals in 'The Three Jolly Travellers'.²⁵ Another middle class character fallen on hard times by dint of a gambling habit, Stammers, also puts on agonies for the benefit of the crew. "Bramble then entered the wretched apartment where Stammers *was lying*, in the extreme of mental torture and physical suffering". (Carleton 1861: 155, *italics mine*) Such middle-class gentlemen as Foster and Stammers are Dublin's "ministers of fate" - Ariel's boast to the shipwrecked crew in *The Tempest* (3.3.61) - who practise deceit and inveigle others to alleviate their own plight, without any concern for others in return. Instead of the Catholic "devotional revolution" of 1845-70, characterised by the "assertion of liturgical practice and a richer visual symbolism" (Larkin cited MacRaild 2003: 558), one controlled by Catholic ritual, *The Black Doctor* reveals a 'bourgeois' devotional revolution.

The gang at 'The Three Jolly Travellers' are devoted to a rich visual symbolism and an Imaginary conception of the goodness of the middle-class, one so powerful the criminals fall on each other as if at war, all in order to help a 'distressed' middle-class gentleman. Foster dictates an image of his suffering wife who he claims is "starving and dying", when in fact Mrs Foster is actually safe in her house, being served by an Irish servant, Nelly. (Carleton 1861: 122) Mrs. Foster herself is an arrogant, duplicitous woman.²⁶ All that the middle-class wish for, among the underclass, is service and information. Foster is so successful among them for manipulating not only his own image, framed like a suffering child, but the image of a suffering mother figure. In the reality of 'The Three Jolly Travellers', Foster's projection of the pains of maternal *jouissance* (his own and Mrs. Foster's), manages to mobilise the criminals into acting on their behalf. A criminal gang are positioned-as-fathers who must help and become like a father, but to a family outside their social class.

For this to be successful, for them to be so suggestible, there can be no position of the father among the men of 'The Three Jolly Travellers'. There is only a near-foreclosed Symbolic and the proximity of maternal *jouissance*. The violence of maternal *jouissance* is what Foster arouses and controls among them. For instance, women are never physically allowed to be present in 'The Three Jolly Travellers'. The tale implies the flower girl cursorily mentioned at the opening is murdered, visiting "after midnight". (Carleton 1861:

²⁵ The affected and strategic mobility of middle-class men between father and child positions is also discussed in the next Chapter, on May Laffan.

²⁶ Mrs. Foster claims to Nelly the servant that her husband, "as he walks the streets, is famishing with hunger". (Carleton 1861: 122) Mrs. Foster plays a parallel trick on a female underclass, only with the starving father figure of Mr. Foster.

81) Any female body becomes intolerable for re-arousing a maternal *jouissance* latent among the men in 'The Three Jolly Travellers'.

The criminals are proximate to the register of the unrepresentable Real, and if the Real does not speak, there is violence (the Real of the body, risking its destruction), and there is calculation - "the Real is rational and the rational is Real". (Lacan 1999c: 180) There are multiple references to the physical sciences: atoms, impulse, principle, observation, power, machine, and mechanics (Carleton 1861: 186). The scientific 'deadness' of a language foreclosed of Symbolic desire is mimicked by how 'observed' is used constantly, or how "rickety old stair case" is used twice. (Carleton 1861: 82, 124) This is not the racy dialogue of *TSIP*, but the dead, rational, dialogue of the Real. Such a relation to language accounts for the automaton-like behaviour of both Tony and the criminals, searching for any desire by which to possess and control the latent maternal *jouissance* surging around 'The Three Jolly Travellers'. The body language of Brunt, Carleton writes, "appeared to have lost all his old characteristics, and whatever he did he *appeared to do mechanically*." (Carleton 1861: 186, italics mine)²⁷ There is no desire in the crew since there is no position of the father, and the men are automatons, doomed to repeat the bare Symbolic they have available. Hence the repetition of gestures, words and phrases, and Carleton's text imitates the mechanical nature of the crew by repeating the description of the stair case, as well as how Carleton uses scientific terms as a metaphor for such behaviour.²⁸

All the time, those in the position-as-child respond as automatons under threat of their existence to the command of Foster. Bramble says how, in service to Foster, he is "ready at any time with what you require". (Carleton 1861: 218) On the same page, Mrs Foster is in turn "willing to do whatever you require", with regard to Mr Foster's wishes. Bramble complains to Brunt, "you are a slow machine". (Carleton 1861: 186) After the fire, Tony says to Bramble, "I will go wherever you go." (Carleton 1861: 250) Suffering is generally attuned to finding a father figure.

Yet there is a dissonance throughout the text between what is suffering and what is manufactured and cynical manipulation, and this generates either a disinterested or paranoid reading position. The reader is left with either inconclusive or contradictory

²⁷ Such mechanical movement recalls *The Tempest* - where one may "be asleep / With eyes wide open; standing, speaking, moving, / And yet so fast asleep" (2.1.217-219)

²⁸ One realisation of a father-occluded Imaginary is the robot, programmed by an Imaginary (computer) language to obey its creator, possessing a body, but without desire of its own. The robot is also a projection of a search for the position of the father.

notices. Take Bramble - "no one bore a higher reputation for courage and good nature" (Carleton 1861: 98) - yet later on, Bramble "turned on a cripple like a wolf, and threw him violently on the ground". (Carleton 1861: 138) The cripple was attacked by Bramble precisely for being an informer and giving information to the wrong person, and intelligible and useful information is at the top of the hierarchy of discourse in the Real, whereas the narrative's personal or emotional content is contradictory and meaningless. A reader's disinterested or paranoid reading position flows from the dialogue, since the 'lingo of the crew' of 'The Three Jolly Travellers' streams out in shades of *noir* narrative, where language is information, dull, but then deadly.

Since the underclass's language is only language as (Imaginary or Real) information (the split between the Imaginary and Real is maternal *jouissance*), the signifier is still only the dead or inhuman Symbolic without flesh. There is hardly desire but information, and so, the signifier is either deadly, or dull, or deadly and dull.

What may seem missing from *The Black Doctor* as *noir* narrative is the *femme fatale*, and it is true that no woman is permitted to be even near 'The Three Jolly Travellers', but the *femme fatale* is exactly the role of Foster. Foster provokes and turns men against their own self-interest and reason, and then walks away from the turmoil, unharmed.²⁹ Foster is both deadly and dull. The figure of the middle class gentleman turns out to be the *femme fatale*, exciting other men to irrational violence and exciting men to provide dead flesh to clothe a signifier the underclass no longer possesses, but sees naked in the *femme fatale*.³⁰ Foster introduces the signifier to the crew. The crew, in a void not only of authority (missing the position of the father), but also in a void of responsibility (missing a dialecticised position-as-child even, there is no Law), are driven to seize any opportunity to achieve a position of the father which then will place flesh on the signifier.

Tony is entirely representative of the search for a father, coming first of all under the control of Brunt, then Bramble, and all the time acting without a will of his own, except for

²⁹ Foster's behaviour is also 'slumming', defined by Koven as a movement of descent across spatial, class and gender boundaries, with many erotic dimensions, whereby excitement, fear, romance, intimacy, and arousal are as crucial, more so, than sexual acts. (Koven 2004: 9, 130, 204) Slumming is one form of feminine mobility operating crucially across class barriers.

³⁰ One of the elements of the Law of the Father in this setting is anti-Semitism, or Jewish flesh sacrificed to clothe the signifier. It is the suggestion of Stammers, who has fallen in debt to Abrahams, which provokes others to murder Abrahams. Anti-Semitism is more or less a means to clear debt. In 'The Three Jolly Travellers' it is information and money which provide men with access to the Law and control over *jouissance*, while in the next chapter, scandal and the infant perform the same function among women.

finding and placating a good father. For leisure, Tony "availed himself of the permission which he had received and scampered off in search of fun or mischief". (Carleton 1861: 298) In Tony's life, there is permission to have fun or instructions to commit crime on behalf of others - all of Tony's activities are automated and commanded, even his leisure - his ego is a traumatised ego dominated by suggestibility and a survival strategy geared towards finding a father. There is only information and obedience - or the position-as-child as an automaton in the Real, without access to a position of the father.

The position-as-child characterising the actions of Tony and Bramble takes part in a chain of (Imaginary) signification without a bare minimum of desire, a system of signification commanding automatic obedience or reaction. Hence the criminal gang *is* their language, just as language was flesh for Denis O'Shaughnessy, only Denis O'Shaughnessy's anxiety was assuaged by being able to become a priest, and finding there the position of the father (for his community as well). Only now, in 'The Three Jolly Travellers', with the position of the father excluded from the crew, there is sheer violence and greed.

Their flesh-as-language seeks information leading either to money (money is an element of the Imaginary / Real, or part of the dead Symbolic). The only place where desire proper is to be found is romance, but a romantic encounter beyond their reach within the ranks of the middle class, such as Brutus's dreams of romance with Stammer's sister, Charlotte.

Crucially, it is important to note the difference by which Denis O'Shaughnessy found romance possible, *only after* attaining access to the position of the father, via the priesthood.

By no such means can the crew of 'The Three Jolly Travellers' find desire, either in the flesh of their own body, and the crew refuse desire attached to female flesh among their own class, such as the flower girl. Instead, their language and bodies, calibrated by wealth, only have a sheer utility value to themselves.³¹ What is apparent is that Foster is like their priest - only by attaining the position of the father advanced to them by Foster, can the crew even dream of romance, attained on entry to another social class.

³¹ Utilitarianism is the philosophical / ontological institutionalising of the automata for a human good, when the automata perversely becomes a metaphor for good, serving an economic function in an industrialising economy. 'The Three Jolly Travellers' is ripe for capitalist industry, and Tony Johnson is an industrious boy.

This mechanism of annihilated and displaced desire is the mechanism for the devotional revolution attached to the middle class. This mechanism is how Foster can be both *femme fatale* and in the position of the father, as befitting a subject commanding and commandeering the Real of others. However, the Real, if it is unrepresentable, is also a historically specific artefact. Foster is not only the author of the position of father, but the author of the Real.³²

Readers familiar with *TSIP* may be shocked, reading the relentless cynicism of *The Black Doctor*, yet there is the same intuitive sketch of what is real in society, as much as in *TSIP*. In between *TSIP* and *The Black Doctor* there has been the Famine, after which, as O'Farrell describes, Ireland was in the grip of "lunatic disorder and irresponsible anarchic social dissolution". (O'Farrell 1982: 13) In *The Black Prophet*, Carleton apologised for starving people in "the ravening madness of famine" forgetting "those legal restraints, or moral principles, that protect property under ordinary circumstances". (cited Kelleher 1997: 33) In *The Black Doctor*, a whole section of society is depicted in a lunatic, irresponsible, ravaging, criminal madness forgetting all legal restraint. If the ravaging madness of *The Black Prophet* was for food, in *The Black Doctor* the ravaging madness is for money. What Carleton is portraying in *The Black Doctor* is the trauma of the Famine carrying into the new, post-Famine monetary economy operating among an underclass dispossessed of land, and indeed, dispossessed of society, when it is dispossessed of the position of the father. 'The Three Jolly Travellers' is a traumatised section of society which has lost its own access to the Symbolic, imprisoned in the violence and potential madness of a father-excluded Imaginary. Thus, the crew may become beholden to a father-occluded Imaginary of bourgeois ideology, so far as a father-occluded Imaginary is potent with images and desire tapered around the position of the father.

Margaret Kelleher has shown in *The Feminisation of Famine* (1997) how the Famine in subsequent depictions of suffering was considerably feminised, particularly by images of suffering mothers reduced to the barely human, unable to feed a child. (Kelleher 1997: 2, 32-39) A mother unable to feed her child is perhaps the archetypal image of the Famine, an image projected back onto an Irish population after the Famine. Subsequently, images of

³² Any suggestion of 'authoring the Real' is a misnomer. However, Foster's class have created and insisted on the conditions which enabled the trauma (neo-liberal economics), and it is Foster's construction of desire in the Symbolic (romance) and framing of the Imaginary (female bourgeois flesh) which then structures reality for the survivors. Traumatized subjects, being hystericalised, are deeply suggestible. See Figure One, note 50.

suffering mothers became a medium for re-transmitting Famine trauma.³³ The transmission of trauma through images is itself a cultural manifestation of a father-occluded Imaginary.

Foster takes care to mention how Mrs Foster, the 'good' mother figure, is *starving*. By his class position, only Foster has access to the 'good' mother, Mrs Foster, and by this access Foster becomes sole occupier of a legitimate position of the father. Since Foster is the only personage to have access to the 'good' mother in the aftermath of the Famine - all other images of women, such as the flower girl, are barred - Foster may access and control the maternal *jouissance* coursing within the environs of 'The Three Jolly Travellers'. Carleton certainly had an intuitive and logical appreciation of a new reality in Irish society. The cult of Mother Ireland followed as a Catholic, nationalist reprise of the trauma of the Famine, a cult which *controlled* the course of maternal *jouissance* in Irish society, and controlled that *jouissance* with a savage overdetermination.

At the end of *The Black Doctor*, Tony will be adopted by Foster as a "bequest" from Bramble. (Carleton 1861: 336) Bramble may always have been far too intelligent to be among the ordinary crew, but Bramble still falls into the colonial Hamlet trap of always operating on his own. Like Hamlet, he (effectively) murders the Jewish outsider,³⁴ and talks to himself in self-pitying, vain, monologues:

"In the letter which I have sent," soliloquised the Black Doctor, as he walked up and down, "I have candidly stated the love which I bear her... Am I not a man better than the thousands who are courted and flattered..."

(Carleton 1861: 298)

Tony however manages to settle down, get married, and from then on lead a respectable life. James H. Murphy describes how lovers in romantic comedy demonstrating a "fidelity to Victorian standards of romance and respectability will achieve the desired goal [of marriage] without the need for further effort." (Murphy 1997: 225) At the end, Tony does little except return to Ireland after being abroad for seven years and quite suddenly becomes "one of the family circle... a most respectable man". (Carleton 1861: 336) Tony Johnson has reached the standards of Victorian romance and respectability precisely by reaching the pitiless, hypocritical standards of Victorian authority and responsibility.

³³ This transmission includes Carleton's *The Black Prophet* (1846). However, Carleton's technique is strategic, made to seduce Lord Russell with such images, or to place Russell in debt to the Irish by making him feel guilt. The limited efficacy of such an appeal is all too obvious, whenever the educating path of colonialism proceeds by trauma. See Figure One.

³⁴ Isaac Abrahams commits suicide, just before Bramble is set to murder him - "hunted to his death by the deep and unrelenting vengeance of his pursuers." (Carleton 1861: 335)

Tony, as Caliban does, learns the “lingo of the crew” (Carleton 1861: 83), but unlike Caliban, is utterly pitiless, and the ‘crew’ of ‘The Three Jolly Travellers’ did suffer the same fate as the crew of *The Tempest*, to come under the control of an aristocratic, colonising figure, Foster. One of this crew, Quill, says, “I can’t go any further... I am aground.” (Carleton 1861: 99) Any man in ‘The Three Jolly Travellers’ would, as Antonio says, “tell the clock to any business that / We say befits the hour.” (2.1.292-294) From being like Hamlet at first, Foster advances to Prospero, returning home to a ‘dukedom’ in the suburbs. Just as Prospero returns from exile on the island, so too does Foster return from his short ‘exile’ in ‘The Three Jolly Travellers’. By the end, Foster will be ensconced in the “perfume-laden air” and twines of “honeysuckle, clematis, and sweet-briar”, of his suburban home. (Carleton 1861: 336)

This last step is always denied the native, even the exceptional native. Bramble, like Hamlet, is a “miserable wreck” at the end of his life. (Carleton 1861: 335) *The Black Doctor* is a rendition of *The Tempest* for Dublin in the 1860s, and the Famine was the great shipwrecking of Gaelic culture which threw up (or abjected) Ireland, on English shores.

In the middle decades of the nineteenth century, Victorian society increasingly split between cities filled with horror and the growth of salubrious suburbs:

Here were found the detached villas surrounded by their fenced and carefully tended gardens which provided hitherto undreamt-of possibilities of withdrawal, but here also were located the teeming communities of the poor who could not afford to turn their homes into retreats from the pressures of modern life, where they could be exposed to the ‘refining influence of culture’.
(Vincent 1998: 22)

The consequence was the development of a strategy of urban development which sought maximum privacy for the civilised, and maximum exposure for the poverty-stricken, whose troubles were to be publicly ventilated, in literature as well, for the benefit of a “moral and psychological as well as a sanitary passion”. (Olsen 1974: 276)³⁶ Instead of Denis O’Shaughnessy trapped in the gaze of the English Other and becoming an aristocratic priest, or Fool Art trapped in the gaze of the Squire in *Phelim O’Toole’s Courtship*, it will be a whole ‘unhappy class’ of person symbolised by the crew of ‘The Three Jolly Travellers’ who will become trapped in the gaze of a middle class. Denis O’Shaughnessy was deeply alienated, and sought to control and usefully turn his aggression to learning and mastery; Fool Art (named from Shakespeare’s play, *King John*),

³⁶ Just such exposure is described by May Laffan, in *The Game Hen* (1879), in Chapter 2.

sought progress, shelter, and temptation by imitating the Squire, stealing his shirt (the colonial land grab symbolically re-enacted and occluded by a collaborator); and Tony Johnson, a son of King John, is also a deeply alienated person seeking entry to a society beyond his reach, except through the incredible and derisory narrative inversion at the end of *The Black Doctor*.

The Black Doctor is Carleton's bitter, satirical response to the moral, psychological and sanitary, meaning *racist* passion of the middle class, which is a passion for removing the head of the underclass (its position of the father), and doctoring history so as to remove its own criminal, or black, responsibilities.³⁶ Moreover, how the 'manufactured' death of Mrs. Foster is a fraud designed to release money for a viciously corrupt middle class is deeply significant.

The Famine provoked a banking crisis, and the trauma of the Famine is profoundly linked to a lack of money as well as food, especially since cash crops for export (wheat, barley, peas, beans, butter, beef, and bacon), were leaving the country as millions starved. Anyone with cash would have survived the Famine. Faced with starvation in *The Black Prophet*, Carleton described how "the people can't stand this, especially when one knows that there's enough, ay, and more than enough in the country." (Carleton 1996: 142) The Famine completely altered the structure of the Irish labour market, integrated Ireland with world labour markets, and afterwards saw a significant increase in Irish wages. (O'Rourke 1994: 312-3) This then led to increasing commercialisation and fluidity in the Irish economy, but not before the peasant class had been denuded of land.³⁷ Tony Johnson is Carleton's symbolically landless, cash-ravaging, suggestible survivor of this trauma.

The Black Doctor then is a parable of the Famine, taking the fraud perpetrated by the Fosters to release money to the already rich, who insist on remaining rich, *at any cost to others*, for the parable's moral. Tony Johnson's reference to John Brunt as a "Peruvian sparrow" is also a reference to one speculated cause of the Famine, from guano fertiliser imported from South America. (Almquist 1986: 942) John Brunt is a thinly disguised version of empire's John Bull, with "shoulders so high that no accommodation had been left for his neck". (Carleton 1861: 82) Cheap plaster statuettes of Shakespeare and Milton adorn his squalid bar, serving as idols which then "spoke of the refined taste and poetic

³⁶ "The association of race with disease and contagion closes the gap between environmental and biological theories of race". (Gibbons 2004: 45)

³⁷ Ó Gráda cites how the "massive increase in bank deposits - from about £8 million in 1850 to £43 million in 1900 - also bespoke increasing commercialisation." (Ó Gráda 1994: 266)

feelings of John Brunt". (Carleton 2002b: 81) As well, the foundations of 'The Jolly Three Travellers' contain the remains of a man murdered by Brunt, an allusion to capital, imperial power.³⁸ The reference to imperial foundations links *The Black Doctor* with *Going to Maynooth* - but Denis O'Shaughnessy's aggressive fantasies of opponents being killed or decapitated are, in the setting of 'The Three Jolly Travellers', all too real.³⁹

In *Phelim O'Toole's Courtship* the aggression is Symbolic, and anyone may occupy the position of the father if they have the wit; in *Going to Maynooth* the aggression is Imaginary, and anyone may occupy the position of the father if they have the correct image; however, in *The Black Doctor* the aggression is Real, and no one occupies the position of the father - an entry point to the Symbolic and Imaginary is at the discretion of the middle class, who have access to the Law of Desire (restricted to romance) and the Law of the Father (restricted to the fertility of white, female, middle class flesh, access to which is controlled by middle class men).

The imperious suffering of the middle classes 'watching' the Famine and pretending both their great distress and culture is exactly what took place - Foster and Stammers pretend their own distress, and affect goodness and trust towards the crew, but only so as to profit themselves, at any cost to the others.⁴⁰ Carleton, in *The Black Doctor*, is mourning how the Famine was as artificial as Mrs Stammers death, and how the same class of people profited, while they mourned their own losses.

Kilfeather notes how Carleton has, along with John Banim, and Gerald Griffin, been positioned in recent criticism as "proto-Dickensian and proto-Victorian writers who are most modern when they describe the nuances of class conflict and least interesting when they deploy the tropes of the Gothic and the fantastic." (Kilfeather 2006: 38) In *The Black Doctor*, class conflict as well as Gothic tropes such as John Brunt finally being burned alive, on view, at a window, are scathingly intertwined in a satire on English pretensions to culture and sympathy. Yet *The Black Doctor* is not simply a satiric afterthought to Carleton's appeal in *The Black Prophet* to English sentiment, but a rationalisation of the Famine, its causes and effects, of how the Famine was a fraud to liquidate capital at any

³⁸ Capitoline Hill in Roman legend is linked with the recovery of a head, or *caput* in Latin, from the foundations.

³⁹ "Whenever his father considered a display of the son's powers in controversy to be *capital*, Denis, who knew the *mollia tempora fandi*, applied to him for a hat." (Carleton 2002b: 105, italics in original)

⁴⁰ For instance the *Times* report in Figure One, note 61.

cost. Even how Tony and Brutus Bramble depart Ireland for seven years to go abroad - the time period of famine in the Bible - is not insignificant. Their symbolic allegiance is overseas at the Famine period.

Any argument over Carleton's political sensibilities can be taken further and should become far more wide-ranging, as is made clear by Carleton's select political references in *The Black Doctor*. For instance, there is a definite Ribbon and Fenian sympathy in the passages describing John Brunt being burnt alive in 'The Three Jolly Travellers'. The manner of the description is loaded with double meanings.

[Brunt] fell into the raging furnace and disappeared for ever... as Bramble gazed on the *bare* gables that stood tottering, *blackened and naked*, like sentries guarding the places of execution of John Brunt the murderer.

(Carleton 1861: 250, italics mine)

John Brunt, Carleton's thinly disguised John Bull, disappears "*for ever*", damned to Hell. Also, it is crucial to note how for Carleton, after the Famine, the colour black codes for the Famine, and "the insanity of desolation" the Famine left in its trail. (cited Davis 1997: 27) Kiely notes,

the stifling preoccupation of so much of William Carleton with the dull black of desolation. He wrote *The Black Prophet* and *The Black Baronet* and *The Black Spectre* and a story with a Gaelic name that meant *The Black Day*. (Kiely 1972: 164-165)

The Black Doctor should be considered as an important addition to the list. As well, how the quote uses the words 'naked' and 'bare', and 'bare gables' standing guard over the murderer, John Brunt-Bull, is unmistakably referring to the naked and bare victims of Famine standing guard as John Brunt-Bull enters Hell. Neither is the closeness of Brunt and burnt, and the political agency of the letter, immaterial.

A Dublin, Victorian, middle-class emulating English society symbolically survives and prospers in pursed, suburban hypocrisy, and Carleton's reader is left a satiric, even political, epitaph.

We have made an humble effort to sketch some people as we have found them; and *if we have failed*, we will not be much disappointed, as very few men, however gifted, can expect to give general satisfaction, if they prefer to draw on their experiences rather than on their imagination for facts.

(Carleton 1861: 337, italics mine)

The tone of the finish is acidic, and Carleton's use of the word 'if' is striking. The failure is not merely aesthetic (Carleton clearly is mocking Victorian Gothic-realism), but *continuing* political failure, a political question still to have its conclusion.

Brutus Bramble's past life in Cuba and Ethiopia also has clear, intensely political associations. Four years before Carleton writes *The Black Doctor*, in the 'Dred Scott Decision', the United States Supreme Court in 1857 ruled that people of African descent, whether or not they were slaves, could never be citizens of the United States, and that Congress had no authority to prohibit slavery in federal territories. The Supreme Court also ruled slaves, or children born there, could not sue for freedom if taken to a free state or territory. The court also charged specifically against giving persons of the negro race,

the right to enter every other State whenever they pleased...the full liberty of speech in public *and in private* upon all subjects upon which its own citizens might speak; to hold public meetings upon political affairs.⁴¹

In the Introduction, I dealt with the political implications of the position-as-child, particularly the implications for rights of entry (barred in the trauma of the primal scene), speech (the loss of a public voice), and control over the division between public and private (in the gift of a father position). The political status of those positioned as children is that of a slave, that is, to be positioned as a subject without the full liberty of speech in either public or private, and not to be able to hold public meeting upon political affairs. The position-as-child is a structural means (elaborated on by Foucault) for imposing control on a native population after it has been freed, but which can then be managed and controlled with equal effect by a coercive ideology structured on infantilisation.

Carleton's reference to Cuba is a reference charged with associations of American expansionism southwards, and especially the validity of the so-called 'Freeport Doctrine', articulated by Stephen A. Douglas in 1858, which suggested slavery could be legal in one U.S. Territory (what are now 'states'), while illegal in others.

In Cuba, above all, the Freeport Doctrine meant perpetuation of slavery in case of annexation, and Stephen A. Douglas always supported annexation of Cuba.
(Rauch 1975: 1048)

⁴¹ Information available online at <http://www.guncite.com/court/fed/sc/60us417.html> [accessed 24 September 2007]. Italics mine.

Brutus Bramble may escape the threat of slavery in Cuba, but *The Black Doctor* raises the question of slavery endemic to Dublin, enculturated in a bourgeois devotional revolution, and its liberal, class-based, economics ready to murder without compunction, murder that is, as if the underclass are mere slaves. The Jew will also lose his life, a different victim to the same neo-liberal economics.

"I will have that will proved to-morrow," said Barman, "and the Jew must come with me to lodge it."

"Be a little *liberal* with him," observed Bramble. "He will require to make *much profit* to compensate him for what *he will soon lose*."

(Carleton 1861: 298)

Instead of proving Phadrick Murray is an ass, now it is proving death - death has been rationalised in a father-occluded Imaginary - the will is 'proved'. It is little wonder slavery becomes the norm, along with a compulsion for access to the bourgeois position of the father. The bourgeois position of the father has authored this trauma, this Famine, and so accessing there presents one means to write out, escape and recover from the same trauma.

Yet the bourgeois position of the father is itself occluded and most inflamed in the genre of romance.⁴² The compulsion and its framing is clear in Brutus Bramble's attempts to court Charlotte Stammers, the sister of the man Bramble also rescues. Charlotte Stammers thus functions as an Imaginary lure in a bourgeois, father-occluded Imaginary, and Carleton satirically asks, "was his love returned? Time will tell." (Carleton 1861: 251) Bramble soon becomes more like Hamlet, and more romantic.⁴³

He was fond of being left alone. What was the cause? He was up to his ears in love with Charlotte Stammers. (Carleton 1861: 297)

Her name itself disparages the Imaginary-bound dullness of her entire class, yet Bramble is up to his ears in bourgeois stammering, as is an entire, unhappy class whose desire has been coerced and is being managed into another form of slavery, with the goodness of white, bourgeois, female flesh as its Imaginary-lure, and the salve for any trauma of dispossession.

There are circumstantial reasons to suggest Bramble is inspired by Tewodoros, the mid-nineteenth century ruler of Ethiopia, and "the first monarch of the country with a concept

⁴² See Chapter 6 for a more full discussion.

⁴³ This drive to solitude in the throes of love also characterised Denis O'Shaughnessy and Susan, in *Going to Maynooth*.

(however vague) of modernisation". (Crummey cited Zewde 2001: 31) Tewodoros had a great personal friendship with a British subject, John Bell, who became Tewodoros's *liqa makwas*, "an important court official who, among other things, acted as the emperor's double, with the aim of misdirecting possible assassination attempts". (Zewde 2001: 36) Tony Johnson functions very like John Bell. Also, "Tewodoros went to great lengths to demonstrate his liking for the British." (Zewde 2001: 37) In combination then, Bramble symbolises someone who has escaped slavery by coming to Britain, where slavery is illegal, but like Tewodoros, his overtures to the British are resoundingly frustrated (if John Bell was his confidant and friend, the British still sided with the enemy of Tewodoros, the Turks - "the [British] nation [Tewodoros] had hoped would be his most reliable ally turned out to be his most bitter enemy." (Zewde 2001: 37) As an allegory warning the black or Irish native, Brutus is highly suggestive.

As such, Carleton's satire was suitable only for Dublin's single, Catholic monthly magazine, the *Illustrated Dublin Magazine* (published by James Duffy).⁴⁴ The *Dublin University Magazine* with its assumptions of "intellectual superiority, if not material prosperity, over the average Catholic Irishman" (Tilley 2000: 65), would certainly have been no outlet whenever these densely political allusions are so evident.

While the middle-class O'Shaughnessy family feared the beheading of the father, the fantasmatic beheading of the position of the father becomes Real among the underclass of the 'The Three Jolly Travellers'. The mobility between the father and child positions illustrated by the freedoms of Phelim, Larry and Sheelah have been utterly curtailed, and even disconnected.

The position of the child is either trapped in the father-occluded Imaginary of a Catholic middle-class, or maintained in the aftermath of the Famine as the dreadful, violent anxiety of an underclass in a father-excluded Imaginary coursing with maternal *jouissance*. In such circumstances, as for another transitional and traumatised political counterpart - post-apartheid South Africa - the child will become a

⁴⁴ "There was no single unified voice abroad in the land in the 1850s. The most distinctive voice in periodicals came from one man, James Duffy, who can be said to have invented a new kind of cosy family Catholicism. He was a publisher of tracts, pamphlets and schoolbooks, missals and histories of Ireland". (Hayley 1987: 104) Tom Clyde refers to Duffy's magazines in the following terms: "The tone of these publications was relentlessly cheerful and pious, and the literary standards woeful". (Clyde 2003: 27) Clyde is not, of course, wholly inaccurate, but *The Black Doctor* has been considerably overlooked.

discursive limit similar to penal incarceration as a limit-category of social abuse or caretaking by which society as a whole can be judged. If so, it is not surprising that children and youth are not only merely conceptualized as victims of the pathological, but they become pathogenic as well. They are not only a vulnerable target of violence and aggression, but are reciprocally positioned: as authors of violence bearing the unmediated social horrors of the past; as suspect actors in the present; and as potential aggressors in the future. (Feldman 2002: 286)

Feldman's description is not unlike the conditions of life for Tony Johnson. This paranoid attitude of the modern State to children scattered from any traumatised, transitional subculture remains salient, both then and today. In *The Black Doctor*, Carleton can no longer imagine the position of the child without grave anxiety. Tony's Johnson's antecedents in Denis O'Shaughnessy and Phelim O'Toole are far off - everything in Tony Johnson's history, both trials and triumphs, sets the Real of the Famine and its liberal economics before the reader.

A deepened, post-Famine "threat of rootlessness" only intensified the land question among both rich and poor, now the land had failed in such a catastrophic manner. (Miller 1975:93) Piecemeal land reform would follow, but in the cabins, in the very last words of Carleton's *Autobiography*, something black remained in the air:

One fourth of [the coals] was sulphur... In fact the place was not habitable; not only we ourselves, but our children, became ill, and I found that to live there was only another word for death. (Carleton 1968: 237-238)

It is impossible not to feel a connection with some hellish remainder of the Famine hanging over the home, and pity for children growing up in the black shadow of the Famine.

The position of the child in the post-Famine social order would be very different from old, and Tony Johnson, its representative, is the blank child of liberalism, literally a *tabula rasa* before any father-figure. Tony Johnson was ready to be imprinted with any father-occluded Imaginary, because a father-occluded Imaginary is a father-included Imaginary. In turn, he responds automatically to any father's suggestion, information, or desire. Tony is a creature whose search for a father, which while seeming pitiful, is itself pitiless. The trauma of the Famine has made the choice of "le père ou pire", or the father or worse, all too real in the society of 'The Three Jolly Travellers'. (Žižek 1992:75-76)

The three tales are tales of inversion: Phelim's revelling is inverted by transportation, and Phelim and his parents repent in Law; Denis's world was inverted from the beginning, but his father dies and he repents of Susan, in romance; Tony Johnson's world is inverted, going from *The Three Jolly Travellers* to 'Rosemary', but Tony repents of nothing. There is movement respectively traversing a Symbolic, to an Imaginary, to a Real position of the child. The Imaginary would mostly win through in the coming century, but in 1861, Carleton created Tony Johnson as the blind, bitter sign of a survival mentality in the shadow of the Famine.

Chapter 2 - May Laffan Hartley

Everything can be summed up in one concept: *the arbitrary*. Pedagogic action in general (prior to any school system) is arbitrary in a *double sense*, not only because it reproduces a determined cultural arbitrariness, the culture of a class whose power it thus confirms, but also because its simple existence introduces into the field of possibilities *a division that never bears its necessity within itself*.
(Rancière 2003: 177, italics mine)

In this chapter I consider May Laffan's satirical novel set among Dublin's middle-class, *Hogan M.P.* (1876), and two short stories set within Dublin's poverty-stricken streets, *The Game Hen*, and *Flitters, Tatters and the Counsellor*.¹ May Laffan's writing is always ambitious - her short stories, novels, sketches, children's novel translated from French, and magazine articles all "differ noticeably from each other in theme and in form, to the extent of giving an impression of strong desire to experiment on the part of the writer" (Kahn 2005: 2) - and I hope this chapter goes some way to showing how clear-sighted, sophisticated and amusing Laffan's writing is in the few pieces I have selected.

Hogan M.P. is a novel dealing with many of the themes I have discussed for Carleton's *The Black Doctor*. Once more, Dublin's foundation on pillars of middle-class rectitude and innocence is thoroughly undermined. The novel tracks the rise and fall of Hogan, a young Dublin lawyer well connected to the Catholic hierarchy by an uncle, an eminent Dublin bishop. Hogan becomes protégé to the mysterious Saltasche, a professional investor famed for risk-taking. Success in this social milieu is as critically dependent on secret information as it was in 'The Three Jolly Travellers' pub of *The Black Doctor*, only now information concerns insider-trading on the stock-market, and uses the latest technology of transatlantic communication by undersea wire going between London and Washington. Saltasche having obtained some such information, and preparatory to gaining his trust, tells Hogan, "there is something nice to be made on the Patagonian Loan." (Laffan 1876: 290). The novel's plot foregrounds this white-collar (and in the background, priest-collar)² corruption.

¹ Both stories are in the collection, *Flitters, Tatters and the Counsellor and Other Stories* (1879), hereafter *Flitters*.

² "The Bishop's interests in this world (his lordship would deny that he had any) were centred in his nephew; he looked upon him as a son, and, like many parents, thinking in his conceit that lack of opportunity and deficient instruction alone had hindered himself from rising to the highest pinnacle of eminence, he determined that the young man should enjoy every benefit that adverse fate had denied himself." (Laffan 1876: 26) Hogan sneers at people in 'trade' in front of his uncle, *for his uncle* - both men ape an aristocratic mien - however, the Bishop is quick to warn Hogan, "don't let anyone *hear you* sneer at trade" (Laffan 1876: 27, italics mine). Hogan describes to Saltasche how Fenianism was "essentially low: it had not a single supporter of the social position of those who were concerned with the Young Irelanders; and I may tell you that priests are intensely aristocratic." (Laffan 1876: 73)

In a Faustian pact arranged through Saltasche as agent of Lord Brayhead, Hogan is to be placed as an M.P. in Parliament expressly to facilitate a bill approving a railway line extension to improve the profitability of a mine owned by Lord Brayhead.³ The sanctified Other in *Hogan M.P.* is not God but information manipulated for wealth, and Hogan's Bishop-uncle, though guarded, is tolerant of such dealing. The Bishop has grounds for caution - Saltasche absconds leaving Hogan open to massive financial exposure on deals the two men had in progress.

What is of interest for discussing a position of the child is how in the novel's romantic relationships between Hogan and Nellie, as well as Saltasche and Mrs. Poignarde, finance and romance are combined in the most striking dissimulation, one where these risk-taking adventurers of capital are forced, to their evident panic, to simulate a position of the child.⁴

To begin with Saltasche, Mrs. Poignarde has just given a piano recital and Saltasche comments how "the general thing with ordinary performers is to try and make us believe they never touch the piano at all." (Laffan 1876: 276) Mrs. Poignarde replies in knowing irony, "Never believe them... I know better; there is nothing in the world that requires more work than - playing". (Laffan 1876: 276) There is a note of dangerous play in their flirtation. When Mrs. Poignarde wishes to leave, Saltasche entreats her to stay, and she replies,

³ The development of the rail infrastructure in Ireland had been consistently retarded, and Ireland had never benefited from the 'Railway mania' of the 1830s and 40s. Ireland in 1839 had twelve miles (in two separate tracks), while England had four hundred and ninety miles (Conroy 1928: 5). Open opportunities for development were also turned down. For instance, state funds supporting the labour constructing Famine roads running nowhere, paid for under the Labour Rate Act of 1846, might, by a proposal from Lord George Bentick in February, 1847, be redirected to constructing hundreds of miles of railway line. Bentick noted in his speech how, "England was in a depressed state in the years 1841 and 1842, and the chief factor in the rapid improvement which had taken place was the construction of railways." (Conroy 1928: 17). However, "English capitalists were unwilling to invest in Irish railways, and the Irish were unable to do so owing to the prevailing depression... [Bentick's] Bill successfully passed its first reading, but it was defeated on its second reading" (Conroy 1928: 17). Economies of scale never transpired on the underdeveloped network. Lord Claude Hamilton, in a speech in 1873 at Westminster, referred to the "high rates and fares in Ireland and stated that the Irish fishery industry was paralysed owing to the bad transport facilities, and that the charges for minerals were so high that the development of Ireland's mineral wealth was seriously impeded." (Conroy 1928: 64) The "question of railway reform was one of the most talked of topics of this period" (Conroy 1928: 67)

⁴ Mrs. Poignarde's gambling husband is bankrupt, enmeshed in gambling debt. Nellie's brother also has a gambling problem which leads him to deceive his family and Nellie. Gambling functions as a cultural subset disseminating the market's function and operations. The play of difference becomes a play of chance, when the Symbolic and its possibilities moves into the rationality of the Real. Metonymy is rationalised into a metaphor of chance, with desire organised around pursuing information leading to a profitable outcome, in either the market or gambling. George Moore's novel *Esther Waters* (1894), treats the matter of gambling's tender mercies.

"I'm tired of it – that's all; and I hate those people. I don't want to see them again, any of them. Now let me go home."

He took her hand in his, and bent forward as if she were some *way-ward child*.

"I only want to please you. You will do exactly what you like. *Command me...*

(Laffan 1876: 278, italics mine)

Saltasche explains he is fully aware of her invidious position, "believe me. I do know your history". (Laffan 1876: 280) Her husband has been overwhelmed by gambling debts, and Saltasche emphasises, "I know all, - all; believe me, for Heaven's sake! I am indeed your truest friend." (Laffan 1876: 280) Yet Saltasche begins to undermine Mrs. Poignarde, and from claiming to be her truest friend is soon frightening her by telling her she has no friends, "What are you to do when the crash comes? ...without assistance you are powerless... You have no friends". (Laffan 1876: 281) Then, from first having asked her to "command me," Saltasche begins to demand total faith from her, "Trust to me, Mrs. Poignarde; let me be your friend, your guide... I will stand by you if you will only trust me, believe in me." (Laffan 1876: 281) They go to leave, "neither knowing where, in silence." (Laffan 1876: 281) At this point,

He stopped suddenly, and faced her.

"Before returning I must know your decision. Will you accept my offer?

Adelaide, *poor child*, will you refuse to let me help you? Look at me,

Adelaide! Say only one word."

(Laffan 1876: 281, italics mine)

Saltasche clearly wishes to confuse, threaten and seduce Mrs. Poignarde with contradictory statements, to position Mrs. Poignarde as a child needing rescue, and a child who if faithful, can be saved. His seduction technique is peppered with religious and financial motifs, such as a threatened "crash" and a final "offer" demanding a firm reply.

Saltasche's anxieties over romance were not to be assuaged with mere promises, but certainty. Certainty will be his redemption (a Calvinist trait), and promises of love are solicited as if under contract law.⁵ Saltasche cannot endure uncertainty, and his constant repine to Mrs. Poignarde is for her to have absolute faith in him, and indeed he 'works' hard to gain such trust. His timing is impeccable, for just when the two are in a liminal space, taking their exit, it is then he demands a final answer.

Saltasche-as-god is playing Mrs. Poignarde like a piano, but like the pianist claiming never to touch the piano, Saltasche 'denies' the history of his playing. His playing at romance and seduction uses economic and sales 'closing' techniques, ramping up the pressure on the

⁵ A masculine Calvinist disposition will be discussed again in Chapter 8 for Marina Carr.

client and in particular, using leave-taking as an opportunity for exerting pressure (the sales pitch is meant to be at a finish, and the client is more relaxed and suggestible at that point). Bourgeois romance in the novel never consciously bears the necessity within itself of the economics in which it is grounded, at least on the masculine side. Mrs. Poignarde leaves, and Saltasche "returned home feeling that he had accomplished a good evening's work." (Laffan 1876: 282) 'Accomplished,' as well as a pun on piano playing, is also Jesus' final word on the Cross.⁶ Laffan thus draws satirical comparisons between seduction and salvation, but structured by economic tropes. The women shall be rescued from poverty and loneliness, and the man shall effect a Christ-like personality. Saltasche's narcissism as a speculator-god-pianist-artist is laid open. Such a narcissistic promise of redemption is the matter of the novel's sad and satirical rub, and why Hogan (and even the Bishop), can consider Saltasche a hero.

What is of especial interest for this thesis is how two adults have engaged in a romantic exchange by co-ordinating a 'commanding' father with a 'dependent' child position. From Saltasche's perspective, Mrs. Poignarde is first of all treated as a petulant "way-ward" child, then repositioned as a father when Saltasche tells her, "command me", only finally to be re-positioned again as a "poor child". As in cinematic narrative, shot-reverse-shot structures a narrative of relative simplicity conjoining two private perspectives via an unlabelled third, public, 'camera' position.⁷ The narrative enacts seduction through alternately positioning two lovers in the position-as-child, such as Saltasche momentarily acting as if he is a child to be commanded by another who he then subsequently treats and calls a child.⁸ The distance between father and child positions finds Imaginary short cuts and new paths of release in the privacy of romantic seduction, if throughout the scene it is Saltasche who directs the switching of positions. In a father-occluded Imaginary the

⁶ "It is accomplished." (John 19:30).

⁷ Compare Foster in Carleton's *The Black Doctor* acting out 'private' misery in public posing as if for a photograph. The new technologies of photography and cinematography were adapted and valorised for switching between the private and public by preferred semiotic, Imaginary codes dominated by bourgeois modes of exchange. "Sauer's equation of recalling traumatic memories with watching a film is an analogy that runs through the cultural history of trauma." (Lerner 2003: 169) Burgess's novel *A Clockwork Orange* (1962) emphasised the same inference by the Ludovico technique.

⁸ The shot-reverse shot structure with the momentary occupation of a child position for the father also re-enacts a colonial history, of colonial fathers landing on foreign soil, being vulnerable and child-like for a brief interlude, then asserting themselves as fathers over the new land. "The Other is cited, quoted, framed, illuminated, encased in the shot/reverse-shot strategy of a serial enlightenment. Narrative and the cultural politics become the closed circle of interpretation. The Other loses its power to signify to negate, to initiate its historic desire, to establish its own institutional and oppositional discourse." (Bhabha 1984: 46)

position of a child works as an *investment* through the fiction of an identification with childhood, one which pays romantic dividends.⁹

Yet it is true that Saltasche's emotions are genuine – "his hands were trembling... his heart beat so as almost to choke him." (Laffan 1876: 281) Mrs. Poignarde also shudders and trembles. If this is an Imaginary denuded of the Symbolic, it is still the case the Real is present and traversed - strong emotions are present - and the semiotics enables an efficient, minimally linguistic, exchange sexualizing the pair in a Master / Slave modality of gender roles.¹⁰ Meanwhile, the reader effectively supervises the transfer of position between the 'lovers'.

Laffan clearly does emphasise how romance is a semiotic exercise in code-switching. In further shot-reverse-shot narrative, after describing Mrs. Poignarde's "wild hope shining in her eyes," Laffan writes how Saltasche's "eyes met hers with a troubled wild look". (Laffan 1876: 280, 281) This choreography of copied looks confirm to the other, 'I see you', in what is an economy predicated on Romantic doubling - Saltasche even sets a "hooded cloak" on Mrs. Poignarde. (Laffan 1876: 281)

If romance gains by the efficiency of an Imaginary semiotic exchange (requiring little imagination or command over the signifier), there is by necessity a paranoiac end result. The ego is always an alter ego - only the Symbolic and speech have the true efficacy to produce and confirm the other as Other - and while the two lovers promise themselves to each other they are not altogether sure of what has taken place, or what is real, between them, if anything. If Mrs. Poignarde has wild hopes about what has taken place, Saltasche feels wild about an alarming encounter perhaps exceeding conscious certainty, but of which he demands certainty all the more.

In the principal romantic scene between Hogan and Nellie, Laffan repeats with variation the little of what was said between Saltasche and Mrs. Poignarde and the type of looks which flashed between them - a semiotic code switching repeats. Hogan begins as a masterful figure who suddenly changes tact,

⁹ Economics also modulates the romantic exchange in O'Brien's *Country Girls Trilogy*, when Eugene will finally concur his "investment in [Caithleen] had been too much." (O'Brien 1988: 447)

¹⁰ The Oedipal inflection of the exchange is overwhelming - a man returns trembling to the position of a child and demands promises of faith and eternal love.

"... I never had a sister," Hogan continued, after a short pause, and changing his tone. "you have no idea what a loss it is to a man... I have missed many a thing in this world, I *think*. I hardly remember my home, and I have had to fight my way single-handed upwards, without a friend, even."

(Laffan 1876: 308, italics mine)

Nellie falls for a simulation by which a father figure disingenuously undermines his own self-command to position himself as a needy child, so as to adroitly position Nellie in the position of the father. There is also another 'romantic' invocation of religion and femininity taking over life, but after work:

"... when the day's work was done, to have some one – some one like you" – and he turned to her – "to talk to me and advise with me – to be my rest and my consolation, my good angel."

(Laffan 1876: 308)

Once more, there are beating hearts and wild looks. Nellie's heart begins to beat "faster and faster," and Hogan asks, "tell me you'll promise to do nothing – to take no step without telling me. You do?" (Laffan 1876: 308). Hogan does the same switching back to the position of the father, demanding control over Nellie's decisions - "A look gave her promise." (Laffan 1876: 308) Hogan, like Saltasche, becomes still more demanding of faith:

"You'll trust me, and confide in me; you'll write to me?... You'll be my Egeria, my goddess! Dear child, you don't know how happy I am..."

(Laffan 1876: 308)

The code switching between father and child positions, the significant looks passing between them such as Nellie "trembling and pale," all these factors repeat, even how Hogan enthuses, "Nellie, dear, I go back to London with a new heart. I'll work harder than ever". (Laffan 1876: 309, 308) Just as Hogan intended to secure a loan from Parliament through a Bill, he "wanted to secure [Nellie] for a set of the Lancers". (Laffan 1876: 39) Both men 'overwhelm' the women in pressured negotiations demanding their complete faith. The men's brief occupation of a position-as-child constitutes the pinnacle of promise at the heart of bourgeois romance, while after, the hero turns to the homosocial and the market for sublimating his new, assured libido and gendered identity.¹¹

¹¹ This libido is directed to attaining the position of the father, vested *somewhere* in the market.

Laffan's short story *The Game Hen* may also be considered in literary parallel with Carleton's *The Black Doctor*.¹² While 'The Three Jolly Travellers' was an all-male preserve, Commons Lane in *The Game Hen* is another poverty-stricken, this time female dominated section of urban Dublin. Both groups rely on information for dominating, controlling and punishing others, information collected and used no matter the cost to any individual. However, while the impoverished women struggle to survive, it will be possession of an infant Laffan reveals as the 'priceless' consolatory goal of life in Commons Lane.

When Petie and his never named, infant sibling move to Commons Lane, the neighbours refuse to allow any privacy to their mother, Honor Walsh, the so-called Game Hen of the title.

Reserve and seclusion are luxuries hardly attainable in a community like Commons Lane, where life is conducted mainly out of doors, and everything seems in a way public property. (Laffan 1882: 105)

Commons Lane operates like a private mini-State, one which does not allow privacy, a state governed by the bad-natured and bitter Mrs. Carmody. Mrs. Carmody owns two cabins in Commons Lane but these "were both let, as she preferred the sensation of being landlord to other people." (Laffan 1882: 102) She herself is a tenant of Mrs. Maguire, an absent landlord, and collects rent on behalf of Mrs. Maguire.

Her rapacity and miserliness, with her tyranny over her own tenants, joined to her habit of watching and reporting the doings of Mrs. Maguire's [tenants] to that lady, caused her to be eternally in bad odour. (Laffan 1882: 103)

Mrs. Carmody is one of that feared and despised species of person in Ireland in the nineteenth century, the land agent, only now of Commons Lane.

Mrs. Carmody ultimately enforces her authority by controlling information, especially scandal, and should she gain leverage over a tenant the rest of Commons Lane are all too eager to join in the condemnation. "Rage and indignation filled every heart," and the women "closed up their ranks against her" in a "determined and cruel way," when it becomes known in Commons Lane how the Game Hen has lied about her 'sailor' husband being away, when actually he is in jail for the killing of a policeman. (Laffan 1882: 118,

¹² Saltasche's and Hogan's strategic performance of the child can be compared with that of Foster in Carleton's *The Black Doctor*. What is revealed in Carleton's story is how the underclass is in search of romance with the middle-class. The same structures of desire and Master-Slave deputation of roles are present, disseminated in romance and class relations.

129) Since the supreme pleasure of the Lane is condemnation (or finding a bad exception), this necessitates collecting information. New arrivals in Commons Lane are interrogated both for the "loved sake of conversational matter," as well as supervision by neighbours. (Laffan 1882: 107) Mrs. Dowling, another resident and sometime friend to Mrs. Carmody, expects to know Mrs. Walsh's "last place of residence... where she had been born, brought up, or married". (Laffan 1879: 106) Private conversation and public supervision ultimately have little to divide them. However, the Game Hen will not yield her shame, and nor will she submit to the imposition of Mrs. Carmody's authority. "Had the Game Hen accepted the position defined for her by the social rulers of Commons Lane, she might have enjoyed a portion at least of the amenities". (Laffan 1879: 130) The Game Hen is a vulnerable new arrival of limited means being forced to accept the authority of a 'father' figure, Mrs. Carmody, but the Game Hen, as her name suggests, altogether resents being treated as a child who must give up her privacy to a father figure.

Of the two main planks of supervisory questions, the first concerns a husband's work and past. When Mrs. Carmody finds out the Game Hen's husband is in jail for killing a policeman, she is delighted, and labels them both "dirty carrion". (Laffan 1879: 98) The redoubtable height of gossip is the history of a woman's body, and if there is scandal. There is an unspoken but binding hierarchy among the women determined by a husband's employment and the woman's sexual history. Indeed, there is a brothel on Commons Lane, and the young prostitute named Peggy has forfeited all rights to any respect - the local children "either knew what she was or aped unconsciously their parents' manner to her." (Laffan 131) An hierarchical scale operates, and for prostitutes,

a certain meed of toleration [is] extended to them - a kind of vicarious out-of-door communication maintained, the reason being no doubt, that the line of demarcation was in their instance laid down and acknowledged by both sides as tangible and real. (Laffan 1879: 129-30)

There can be social relations with the outcast, on condition the hierarchy is respected as 'real'. This same hierarchy can also shield Mrs. Carmody from charges of impropriety - "the old woman's name, and her driver, Paudheen's, had long been coupled together in the lane." (Laffan 1882: 102) Class is the ultimate arbiter marking the lines of demarcation. As Kahn notes,

The complicated social life of Commons Lane is not idealized or made deliberately entertaining. It is shown to be just as formal in its way as social structures elsewhere in Irish nineteenth century society. At the top of the class structure are Mrs. Carmody and her partner Paudheen. (Kahn 2005: 177)

Though the Game Hen is bereft of friends and money, she fights to assert her own dignity independent of Carmody's lines of demarcation - the Game Hen only sees such lines "in the process of creation". (Laffan 1879: 130) The Game Hen thinks her force of personality can secure her privacy, but for such a lack of deference, the Game Hen becomes an object of hatred to Mrs. Carmody – hospitality *per se* is non-existent.

Laffan does however write of how there might exist sympathy between women, only a sympathy women can either hardly express, or are not permitted to express. Two ostensible enemies might have an inexpressible sympathy for each other. *The Game Hen* begins the day after the night the Game Hen has inflicted a battering on Mrs. Dowling. The next day, Mrs. Carmody's driver, Paudheen, tells Mrs. Dowling how he saw the Game Hen last night on her step, "wid her head in her two han's cryin'", and Paudheen illustrates the Game Hen's gesture by "clasping his hands together and stretching them out". (Laffan 1879: 91) Paudheen is trying to convince Mrs. Dowling the Game Hen's gesture is a threatening gesture, but Mrs. Dowling turns on the man for being "a disturber," and says, "Let the woman be." (Laffan 1879: 92) Mrs. Dowling appreciates intuitively that the Game Hen's gesture is more likely "that of prayer than of fighting". (Laffan 1879: 92) After her conversation with Paudheen, Mrs. Dowling turns to look at the cabin of the Game Hen, and "raising both her arms in a manner that *sadly* disarranged the Paisley shawl, collected the stray hair from her back..." (Laffan 1879: 93, *italics mine*) The body language of the two women expresses a suffering as each raise their arms in despondency or sadness, but on their own. Laffan shows symbolically how the bodies of the women cry out for a touch of understanding from each other, perhaps even from God.¹³ Like children in *Artane*, the women are packed close but are emotionally and physically distant. The women bear a division within themselves dividing one from the other.

Laffan's text suggests one reason for Mrs. Carmody's vicious disposition is childlessness. If a child compensates women for a lack of the phallus, Mrs. Carmody is poverty stricken in this economy. Her substitute defence is to accumulate wealth and wield influence - since

¹³ Estragon in *Waiting for Godot* performs the same action of raising his arms, for the same need, even a final need of a God when Estragon with Vladimir cannot have a companion who recognises him as a human being with a body which needs comforted. The only 'touch' allowed between men in *Waiting for Godot* has that Master-Slave modality, in the relation between Pozzo and Lucky.

influence is wielded most by those who disburse scandal, scandal becomes another phallic object, by which to destroy an enemy.¹⁴

The parallel between child and scandal as phallic objects may be noted by how Mrs. Carmody, after finding out the secret of the Game Hen's husband in jail contentedly sighs, "ta think how *things* comes out in this world". (Laffan 1879: 98, italics mine) 'Things' coming out in this world signifies scandal, but children are also 'things' which come out into the world, and scandal serves to balance and substitute for the child as the phallus. The inference is also clear from how the neighbours view Mrs. Brady, an unhappy and withdrawn woman whose husband is an alcoholic who beats her, giving her a black eye. "She has no children, ye see," went on Mrs. Dowling in the tone of one explaining and accounting for *things*." (Laffan 1879: 146-147, italics mine)¹⁵ The black eye and alcoholism are *not* a scandal since they are rationalized and accounted for by an infertile marriage.

However, within this economy, the value of the child is predicated on the child being an infant. The Game Hen's child, Petie, is ignored wherever he goes. Only Peggy is sympathetic - "she protected him from the other children in the lane, who, when "his strange fits came on, teased and mocked him." (Laffan 1882: 130-131) Petie will end up in Artane, where he is only a "poor commodity," as a cabman comments. (Laffan 1882: 162) Petie and Peggie are poor commodities on Commons Lane, a place with an hierarchical social structure similar to both Artane and 'The Three Jolly Travellers' public house. Tatters, the Counsellor, Peggie, and Petie, as well as the murdered Jew, Abraham Isaacs, are all supernumerary, 'unreal' creatures within this social structure.

The infant is altogether the most worthy personage in the affective economy of Commons Lane, and this in particular is shown by how Laffan constructs a pastoral scene. One May afternoon, Petie, Peggy, and the Game Hen's unnamed infant are "seated in a sunny spot at the back wall of Mrs. Carmody's cottage." (Laffan 1882: 132) Laffan's humorous sense of dissonance adds Mrs. Burke's pig, which "contemplated the trio with an *air* of beatitude". (Laffan 1882: 132, italics mine)

¹⁴ The Irish Catholic obsession with reputation, especially sexual reputation, flows from both scandal and the child operating as substitutes for the phallus. See Chapter 5.

¹⁵ A similar, rough and ambivalent use of 'things' to signify 'children' occurs in Synge's *The Well of the Saints* (1907). "It's many a woman is married with finer than yourself should be praising God if she's no child, and isn't loading the earth with things that would make the heavens lonesome above". (Act 1: 464-467; Synge 1968: 71)

... the baby was asleep lying across Peggy's lap, and she was talking in a low voice to the boy [Petie], and every now and again stroking with her white, soft fingers the infant's cheek. There was a curious *air* of innocence, even of rurality, about the scene... the swallows, newly arrived, were circling and screaming.. and a linnet, prisoned in a tiny cage, sang its loudest and sweetest. Peggy fixed her eyes dreamily on a pair of swifts... For one moment Mary Kennedy was at home again in the yard at milking-time...

(Laffan 1879: 132,133 italics mine)

Holding the infant and stroking its cheek, Peggy nostalgically assumes her past identity of Mary Kennedy (her name before she came to Dublin and worked as a prostitute), and for "one moment Mary Kennedy was at home again in the yard at milking time; the whole *air* was sweet of the cows' scented breath". (Laffan 1879: 133, italics mine) Holding the infant, Peggy can go back to a 'whole' past. A similar scene unfolds in *Flitters*. Flitters visits her friend, Mrs. Kelly, who lets Flitters hold her infant. "Who could describe the delight and pride of Flitters so honoured and trusted? She had only one wish in the world, it was that her enemy, Mrs. Dowling, might see her at this moment." (Laffan 1882: 61) Holding an infant sends these two young female 'outsiders', Peggy and Flitters, into transports of delight. Though Flitters is affected by this fetishistic and sentimental proclivity over the infant, she will not accept becoming prisoner in an industrial school. Neither Flitters nor the Game Hen accept the doleful position-as-child allotted them by a class structure.

But in the curious air of innocence, swallows are "circling and screaming," and soon they are "wheeling overhead and calling to each other". (Laffan 1882: 133) The swallows symbolise the neighbours' vicious social gaze placed over Commons Lane - a gaze emanating from a class structure.

The Game Hen returns and snatches the infant away, striking Peggy, and pausing at her doorstep to look back with "her thin, dark face glowing, and showing her gleaming teeth" (Laffan 1882: 135). Petie follows "with the air of a frightened rabbit". (Laffan 1879: 135) Possession of an infant separates the women from being animal, and the threat of its loss turns women into savage animals.¹⁶ With the infant, the air is a pastoral fantasy of a whole past, but without the infant, in the struggle over possession for the infant, the air becomes threatening, animal and harsh. The infant divides the world between the pastoral and the animal, between private nostalgia and public rancour, and this is the function of the infant

¹⁶ An infants' 'goodness' thus can have a similar disintegrative effect as money did in 'The Three Jolly Travellers' in Carleton's story *The Black Doctor* - the pursuit of money as a civilising process, supervised by Foster, did at times turn the men into lawless 'savages'.

as the phallus, to become the vehicle which can convert presence into privacy. The cultural formation of the phallus in capitalism is any instrument for conferring privacy on the subject, and in this environment where "everything seems in a way public property," the infant is the only private property a poor woman may possess for herself. (Laffan 1879: 105) Laffan's reference to "a linnet, prisoned in a tiny cage" is almost certainly a reference to Wordsworth's poem, *The Green Linnet* (1807):

One have I marked, the happiest guest
In all this covert of the blest:
Hail to Thee, far above the rest
 In joy of voice and pinion!
Thou, Linnet! in thy green array,
Presiding Spirit here to-day,
Dost lead the revels of the May;
 And this is thy dominion...
Too blest with any one to pair;
Thyself thy own enjoyment...
My dazzled sight he oft deceives,
A brother of the dancing leaves;
Then flits, and from the cottage-eaves
 Pours forth his song in gushes;
As if by that exulting strain
He mocked and treated with disdain
The voiceless Form he chose to feign,
 While fluttering in the bushes. (9-16, 23-24, 33-40)

The reference to a 'green array' for Ireland, the infant as underpinning an Hegelian 'Presiding Spirit' of the bourgeois which is exactly the narcissistic, individualist spirit of "Too blest with any one to pair; Thyself thy own enjoyment", all resonate with Laffan's short story. The infant, like the linnet, is the 'loudest and sweetest" prisoner of the voiceless Form of a class structure valorising the private. The air in Commons Lane is poisonous except from the presence of the infant, whose presence affirms each woman and lets them feel honoured, innocent and whole. Commons Lane is a dominion of the 'voiceless form' of the 'green linnet' of poor, urban Ireland - the infant. Commons Lane operates by an unspoken economy where the preferred transactional object between women is neither their own body or voice, but either scandalous information or an infant child. Only by keeping some scandal or holding an infant can a woman cross the barrier between public and private.¹⁷

¹⁷ Holding infants is still used by bourgeois politicians for political capital, if by now the exercise is a shallow one.

The movement between the private and public is the bourgeois Oedipal moment par excellence, and the infant presents the solution to such anxieties by embodying the Real of the division between private and public.

The different values placed on the public and the private are part of a division constantly practiced as a necessity in Commons Lane, however this necessity is one "that never bears its necessity within itself." (Rancière 2003: 177) Ideologies must simultaneously practise and obscure the arbitrariness of their supposed necessities, and in *The Game Hen* on Commons Lane, bourgeois ideology is insinuated and borne by the woman inside her body by a womb that in bourgeois ideology 'reproduces a determined cultural arbitrariness'. The woman unconsciously bears the necessity of the division between public and private within herself, within her own body, and that is as true for Mrs. Carmody as for the Game Hen. The privacy of the womb to an outside manifests the private and public barrier, apart that is from sperm, whose Symbolic power is thus confirmed by reproduction.¹⁸ Such a division of public and private tied either to a legitimate or scandalous event of impregnation supplements a bourgeois necessity invoking the legality of the penis, but with the penis and sperm as part of the Real. Instead of paternity as a Symbolic legal fiction, paternity acquires a function in the Real, and this unconscious internalisation within the body and minds of women is the basis on which a pedagogic action might be turned to effect throughout society. Bourgeois culture seizes on the womb as the ultimate bearer of social responsibility, and as the ultimate reality of the private.

But it is only at the time of birth – when the real child takes up in the outside the place it occupied inside – that the gap between the imaginary object and the real object opens up its disturbing hiatus. Not that the child is better or worse than the dream child. Not even that it is a boy or a girl or the other way around; it is only of another register: it is real. (Lemoine-Luccioni 1987: 26)

The private being the object of desire in bourgeois culture, the infant is the only material of the Real a woman is permitted, and then only, legitimated by marriage. Among the poor women of Commons Lane, the infant as the private transacts the Real in the affective economy of Commons Lane - their only access to the Real and the private is the infant.

In contrast to incarnating the Real or being misbegotten creatures such as Petie, the three performing street 'arabs' in *Flitters*, *Flitters*, *Tatters* and the Counsellor, though they are

¹⁸ Mary Condren describes how the Catholic Church's patriarchal reality is obvious by its central concern with shepherding "male seed" rather than children, women, families, or the wider community. (Condren 1988: 204)

children and Tatters is only six, are all consummate, seasoned performers, something Laffan's story continually delights in revealing. For instance, at the Dublin dockside, the three children await departing passengers:

The trio waited lazily until the vehicle had drawn up at the shed below... all three bounced up and set out in pursuit... waited cheerfully until the passengers should have disposed their effects below, and come up to enjoy the fresh air on deck.
(Laffan 1879: 13)

Though the children are racked with hunger, they wait 'lazily'. However, once the passengers note them, the children register that they have been seen by the passengers, by then switching to waiting 'cheerfully'. "A keen observer might have remarked beneath the apparent nonchalance and lassitude of the group a certain patient pre-occupation, at once watchful and passive." (Laffan 1882: 10) The children are discerning with timing their shifts of mood and emotion, always being on the look-out for an unsuspecting audience which considers them 'innocent' so as to exploit this 'innocence'. Even on his own, little Tatters remains vigilant over any opportunity for scamming food.

Tatters executed a sort of little dance on the flag as soon as he felt the eyes of both [women] turned on him. This was *meant to show* his diffidence and *unwillingness to intrude on their privacy*, and had the effect he intended.
"Come in here wid ye," ordered the mistress.
Tatters skipped joyfully across the clay floor and seated himself, cross-legged, in the firelight.
"Didn't ait a bit the day," he said, turning up his blue eyes appealingly to her.
(Laffan 1876: 31, italics mine)

Tatters cadges not only food from them but porter - Father Mathew's Temperance Movement has had little impact on Tatters' life, and dancing outside a door awaiting an invitation to cross the threshold and come in and take food and drink, Tatters is very much like a fairy child.¹⁹

The sophistication of Tatters is once more shown when a steamer pulls out from the dockside after they have entertained its passenger, and an English gentleman began "vainly fumbling with the other [hand] among a lot of half-crowns for something smaller" (Laffan 1879: 17). This gentleman can only find some larger change, and

deeming these too much, was about to return them to his pocket, when he caught sight of Tatters' plaintive little figure, the shirt-tail drooping, and his head set wistfully to one side, *watching him*. (Laffan 1879: 17, italics mine)

¹⁹ Such as *The Child in Yeats' The Land of Heart's Desire* (1904), discussed in Chapter 4.

Though he seems not ostensibly part of the performance and is offstage to Flitters on centre stage, Tatters delivers an impeccable "plaintive little figure". Setting his head wistfully to one side yet managing to catch the attention of the passenger looking for smaller change, Tatters *becomes* 'something smaller'. Suitably pressed upon by sentiment, the English gentleman throws a half-crown, "straight into one of Flitters' frock pocket-holes" (Laffan 1879: 17). Later on, Tatters, though stricken with upset over Flitters' terrible accident, "in all his grief, did not for an instant lose his self-possession, or forget his mendacity, and was in the middle of a pathetic family history..." (Laffan 1882: 67-68) Tatters also executes the same ploy with nuns, composing himself to appear as a "forlorn, dissipated Cupid", in need of rescue. (Laffan 1882: 71) The nuns provide him with new clothes at which he is "radiant with delight," and he promises to go to Mass. (Laffan 1882: 77) However, as soon as he can do so, Tatters then

proceeded to the nearest pawnshop, and pawned the Mother Superior's gift for tenpence, with which sum clenched tight in his hand he set out in search of the Counsellor to give him his supper. (Laffan 1882: 78)

The three children are not lucky amateurs relying on fortune and pity from passers-by but consummate performers enjoying their trade, and keeping an eye open for every opportunity.

Neither are the children in dumb awe of their more celebrated colleagues on the Dublin stage. Over a meal, the three children discuss "the merits of the cast playing the *Shaughraun*, with the critical acumen that distinguishes their race - all born actors." (Laffan 1882: 24) There is no diminution of the children's ability - the tale takes almost as much pleasure in divulging the trio's trickery as the trio themselves take in plying their trickery, guided all the time by Flitters.

In a society where women ideally were limited to the privacy of the home - "the role of women was seen as narrowly domestic" (Kahn 2005: 27) - Flitters is drawn from a different well. The first words of the story begin with a highly unconventional image of this young girl:

Ladies first. Flitters, aged eleven, sucking the tail of a red herring, as a member of the weaker and gentler sex demands our attention. (Laffan 1882: 1)

Assuming the correct protocol of 'ladies first' and then demanding our 'attention' on behalf of Flitters, the text positions the reader as gentle, and prompts the reader toward a

sentimental regard for the 'weaker and gentler' female sex. Yet in the middle of the sentence is a clause containing the image of a girl sucking a herring, defying all conventional sentimentality. Laffan thus sets up an affective dissonance between the text's own image of Flitters and the sentimental tendencies of the reader which the text also calls forth. Flitter's image and a reader's sentimental image of Flitters based on the reader's self-image, must clash. The limited imagination of sentimental regard is put under pressure by the text's latent trill of irony working against sentiment. Laffan's wit often works in an ironic mode aimed at soliciting and then undermining a sentimental reader's self-regard - Laffan's writer often subtly satirises the approved colours of sentiment, throwing the 'red herring' of innocence at the reader only then to retrieve that innocence back. Laffan mimics sentiment to play with sentiment, and the three children do exactly the same in their performances, such as Tatters giving out that look to a passenger.

Looking over a dockside audience, Flitters, with her own brilliant intuition, singles out "a benevolent countenance" and makes a comical bob to the gallery, asking the lady for a copper. Some unknown passenger, a begrudger, has been watching the children rake in money all afternoon and complains, "You have enough." (Laffan 1882: 15) Flitters, however, is fast and determined to get more money, and shoots back,

Me mother is lyin' sick, and me father's in hospital this month wid a broken leg an' arm, an' she has nothin' but what me an' me little brothers takes her,"
Flitters went on rapidly, without a pause even for breath. (Laffan 1882: 15-16)

Flitters' story convinces no-one, nor is it meant to convince. Being so sentimental, rapid and yet polished, Flitters' delivery lets the passengers delight in ambivalence over both the story's potential for truth and brazen deceit. Flitters is perhaps the most talented, such as this sally shows, and she has

an ear and some turn for mimicry. She had not visited, without profit, the music halls of the metropolis and the theatres where London Boucicault companies import new varieties of Irish brogue, and she gave out the patter with surprising voice and distinctness. (Laffan 1882: 14)²⁰

Since she cannot read, Flitters makes the Counsellor repeat to her "line by line, the words of her new songs till she knew them by heart." (Laffan 1882: 62) The latest versions of Irish brogue arriving from London are important to their act. Flitters enthusiastically

²⁰ Tatters is the name of Conn the Shaughraun's never-seen offstage dog in Boucicault's play, an alarming yet tender allusion by Laffan to street children being treated like dogs, to be cleared off the 'stage' of the streets.

attends on the shifts of 'Irish' identity without stint over any supposed authenticity, or lack thereof.

On the dockside a passenger shouts, "Sing another song for me, my girl" (Laffan 1879: 16). Flitters recognises the English accent, "good always in the ears of her kind for double pay, and vry appropriately struck up "Come back to Erin, mavourneen." (Laffan 1882: 16) It is an English audience which especially favours such mournful, nostalgic airs. Such proclivities not only dispel the idea of an authentic Ireland, but of Irish authenticity amongst the Irish - Boucicault's plays and their affected Irishness were popular in Dublin as well as New York and London. Sentimental Irishness is a theatrical bandwagon (such as in Boucicault's world-wide successes), one these children are aware enough of to profit from. More than this, Laffan is satirising the crud of authenticity and innocence engendered in the Romantic construction of the child. Flitters perceives not only the artifice but the marketability of Irish national and child stereotypes - one newly-arrived tourist mutters seeing her how, "it's a gypsy, *surely*" (Laffan 1882: 16, italics mine). The ending 'surely' is another ironic twist, showing how tourists come to Ireland in order to enjoy picking up some Irish manners of talking. Flitters certainly has as good an ear for the monetary as well as for the theatrical.

The three are well aware of the ironies and uses of their 'innocence', as well as the market's incongruous demand for sentiment, such as an English passenger being delighted best with *Come back to Erin, mavourneen*.²¹ In fact, innocence is their own most inauthentic sentiment, as the trio constantly reveal by anticipating and conditioning their audience to believe in the trio's lack of awareness and innocence (such as that dockside laziness). The children create a performance context so that the demand of the audience for sentiment and innocence is satisfied. The audience are far more innocent than the children - the trio ably construct a false sense of mastery in the audience. There is a Blakean irony scattered throughout Laffan's prose concerning who are innocent, and who are experienced, and what is innocence, and what is experience.

Rather than passively providing an image of abjection and vulnerability, the children are ironic and quick-witted. After a good day's work their "sole thought is to amuse

²¹ In 1963 the air was sung for John F. Kennedy's visit. At a reception in Limerick Kennedy said how, quoting from the song's lyrics, "This is not the land of my birth, but it is the land for which I hold the greatest affection and I certainly will come back in the springtime." Available online at <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=9321> [accessed 9th August 2007].

themselves,” and best of all at the theatre. (Laffan 1882: 18)²² What is most striking about the children is how they demonstrate a professional turn of fancy, which carries fiction lightly. Before strangers and figures of authorities, they neither simper with fear nor become compulsive truth tellers but maintain a very sanguine and inventive mask. A child's ability to pretend is, of course, not so threatening - lying is expected from children - and as the hospital story demonstrates, it can delight an adult, but a child lying to the police or priest is supposed to betray his or her emotion (incapable of the self-division of lying). However, the children in *Flitters* are neither scared nor intimidated at fiction-making before adults.

Basically, the children with their planning and their body language create a veil for the audience. This veil separates the child from the adult, as if the adult is watching as if from a private perspective. The children then permit the adults to believe it is the adults who break the veil and designate the invitation to begin a performance (or with Tatter's and the two women, to enter their home). The children thus behave as if the privacy of the child is minimal while the adult is safely in charge of adult privacy. The children thus provide the adult audience with a 'fake' permission to open or close the veil separating private and public. The analogy is with theatrical curtains - the curtains must be pulled apart for the performance to begin, but not by one of the actors. The children could act as if ready at all times for the performance, they could act cheerfully in anticipation, but that would deprive the adults of the pleasure of summoning the performance by parting the curtains themselves. The pleasure that would be deprived is the pleasure of privacy the adults felt before a performance begins. By actually controlling the veil / curtain themselves, the children are more aware of what the pleasure of privacy is than the adults who presume, summoning and watching them, that the children are always in public - and this is the innocence the adults project on the children, of the children lacking privacy.

Laffan does not demand such innocence of the children, that is, to have their thoughts in public. While their conversation tacks like an adult conversation between the merits of the cast of 'Shaughraun', "personal topics", and "the vexed question, ever recurring, if not always uppermost, of ways and means," these 'personal topics' are glossed only in passing, and are not 'revealed' by Laffan although of course Laffan is author to these fictional characters (Laffan 1879: 24). Laffan is clearly making a point. Laffan is an author who

²² In *Scholars and Rebels* (1999), Terry Eagleton describes the hedonism permeating fin de siècle, middle-class Dublin, a culture where "the master desire was for enjoyment" (1999: 43).

takes care to respect even a fictional child's right to privacy, and not demand to know what is personal of children.

This is the deepest trill of irony working against the sentiment that an author should know the personal thoughts of her child characters. In the story, the children have the ability to deceive adults without being punished, an authorial position running against the patronising and paternalistic tendency of most fiction concerning children. There is no crisis of representation milling around Laffan's text, a text which gently celebrates *not knowing* what is going on in a child's head, and celebrates *not knowing* what is going on between children in their shared conversation.²³ Laffan is glad for authorial ignorance to include children - the children have a privacy which Laffan respects - if they are young, are not in the slave-like position-as-children. The figure of the child "just because it stands for simplicity, transparency, self-evidence, is often read [and written] as being itself transparent and self-evident." (Thomson 2005: 262-262) The children in *Flitters* are clearly not simple, transparent and self-evident, and this clearly is Laffan's own ethical stance in regard of how children are, and how they should be treated. Children, including 'delinquent' children, deserve the supposedly adult privilege of privacy, and not privacy by adult sanction, but the creating and breaking of privacy by their own thought and imagination. The difference between the private and public is only a fiction, but now it is a fiction children can manipulate.

As well, not only are the trio capable of supporting themselves financially and accepting that responsibility, but emotionally the trio function contentedly as a family. The Counsellor and Tatters can play the 'father' and swap drolleries about money, "Nothin' like money... Ah! money the devil!" (Laffan 1895: 26) Flitters becomes angry with Tatters for gambling, but suddenly relents:

'Whist!' said Flitters, not unkindly, 'yer a misfortunate gomerall,' Then she took up the skirt of the princess robe and wiped his face compassionately.
(Laffan 1895: 50)

Tatters is sometimes the provider, such as the occasion of pawning the clothes he dispensed from the nuns - even little Tatters is able to obtain and enjoy the rights and responsibilities of a parent going home to put food on the table. Age and sex are of little

²³ By contrast, the field of children's literature "exists by virtue of its reliance on assumptions that we can, and do, *understand and control meaning in others*." (Lesnik-Oberstein 1994: 181, italics mine) At the top of the hierarchy of discourse of children's literature, are figures such as Foster

consequence in exercising the role of father, mother, or child - the roles are as open as the arms of whoever gives and whoever needs, and *Flitters* is a very affecting piece of writing. The mobility in *Don Juan*, so close to art but not art, and a sincerity and closeness to what is nearest, belongs to the children. Seeing *Flitters* on a stretcher, "quiet and silent as a stone," Tatters "fell back against the wall and gasped with terror, grief and rage," and the Counsellor "uttered a wide-mouthed howl" (Laffan 1895: 66-67). The children have a profound and passionate attachment to each other, one which should be called love.

In all this, Laffan's stance goes against the prevailing mid-nineteenth-century attitude. Margaret May quotes Matthew Davenport Hill's 1855 portrayal of a juvenile delinquent as epitomising the new attitude of the State to delinquency:

[the delinquent] is a little stunted man already - he knows too much and a great deal too much of what is called life - he can take care of his own immediate interests. He is self-reliant, he has so long directed or mis-directed his own actions and has so little trust in those about him, that he submits to no control and asks for no protection. He has consequently much to unlearn - he has to be turned again into a child...

(cited May 1973: 7)²⁴

Laffan does indeed engage with this perspective, though less to confirm the moral imputation of Hill than solicit sympathy for the children. *Flitters* has a "tangled, tufted, matted shock of hair that has never known other comb save that ten-toothed one provided by Nature, and which indeed *Flitters* uses with a frequency of terrible suggestiveness." (Laffan 1882: 2) The Counsellor is "nine years old, but might have been ninety, for the *Weltkunst* his wrinkled, pock-marked countenance portrayed." (Laffan 1882: 6) Tatters is "about six years old, small and infantine of look, but with a world of guile in his far-apart blue eyes." (Laffan 1882: 4) Tatters is also mentioned in the story following *Flitters*, *The Game Hen*, and not imitating or eating a lamb, but being compared with one. At Artane industrial school, Tatters is in a field "kicking his legs over the cabbages," with his "white forehead and a crop of fair curls" (Laffan 1879: 171). Now the child has been reduced to the condition of a lamb, a sentimentalised, commoditised, and farmed animal. From a

in Carleton's *The Black Doctor*, or Prospero in Shakespeare's play. Since Caliban resists, he will be treated as a 'bad' child.

²⁴ This returning of the child-as-adult to a child invokes the child as *tabula rasa*, but the structural violence and trauma of any such return is unavowed beneath a message of redemption. However, history is complex and contradictory. Industrial schools began with "a charitable and compassionate commitment among the religious" and did deliver benefits to many children, as well as "an improvement over the existing charter schools and workhouses where many of these young people had been exploited." (Molino 2001: 34, 37)

'superabundance of life' with acting, we move to a superabundance of frightened obedience.²⁵

At Artane, the Counsellor becomes 'Peter Cassidy,' and Tatters and him pretend to be brothers. Peter and Paul Cassidy, separately asked do they recognise the boy Petie in *The Game Hen*, also from Commons Lane, reply, "I disremember him, sir," or "I nefer seed him afore, sir." (Laffan 1895: 172,174) The children in Artane are now being compared with the treacherous saint, Peter, who in the Bible denied Christ - the children are physically close, but emotionally and spiritually far apart, as the women on Commons Lane.

Laffan does not shy from describing the haunted, desolate emotional state of children such as Petie, but once again, disdains sentimental pity. In a moving section, Laffan describes Petie in these terms:

An odd-looking child naturally... singular and remarkable figure ... something odd about those eyes, which seemed to stamp, in a way quite their own, the character of the whole physiognomy. Now and again, if anyone took the trouble to watch the child's face, a curious flicker passed over it... the normal expression, a mixture of impotent shrewdness and plaintive disingenuousness, faded clean out and gave place to something that was not quite pain, for it was silent, and the face was a child's; nor quite terror, for it was short-lived; and yet it was both at once. (Laffan 1879: 95-6)

Laffan notes the disingenuousness of the child, but with neither disapproval or approval, and only an appreciative affection. Petie is discovered alone on the streets, taken, and 'sentenced' to five years at Artane. "State recognition of Reformatory and Industrial Schools in 1854 and 1857 marked a radical change in policy" towards "the problem and treatment of delinquency," so that children coming before courts "were no longer regarded as 'little adults' but as beings in their own right entitled to special care because they lacked full responsibility for their actions." (May 1973: 7)²⁶ In *Flitters*, the children are always

²⁵ The phrase is from *Emile* (1762), where the youth's "superabundance of life seeks to extend itself outwards. The eye grows animated and surveys others". (Rousseau 1979: 220) Rousseau is not a great advocate of speech - "To expect to be always listened to is a form of tyranny which is not good for the child" - if Rousseau must be heard. In *Flitters*, Tatters and the Counsellor, a superabundance of life searches for the artifice of fiction and voice.

²⁶ The first industrial schools in Ireland were opened in 1869, with 183 children committed to them. Five years later, the figure was 3,000. The funding system (a capitation grant per child) provided a considerable incentive to maximise the number of children. While primary school education became obligatory by law in 1870, a significant number of children were still left unable to read or write. (Raftery and O'Sullivan 1999: 92-93, 155)

responsible for their actions.²⁷ The children could forfeit their responsibility for themselves and guarantee their daily bread by "breaking a lamp or demanding alms of a poor law guardian," but this is a fate dreaded by them (Laffan 1879: 67) The "recipients of the bounty are rarely in accord with this opinion". (Laffan 1882: 62) Laffan also debunks the myth of philanthropy propping up incarceration in the reformatory system.²⁸

Magistrates are only too glad to clear the streets of such creatures, knowing that, however costly the reformatory system may be, it is a saving in the long run.
(Laffan 1895: 66)

Should Flitters be caught, then to avoid starvation Tatters being so very young would have to break a lamp. The Counsellor is older and can read, and must have had some education, and might be able to survive alone.

The great question arising from *Flitters* is how do such 'delinquent' children have the imagination, and the permission to imagine living a life full of adventure? How do the children have permission in their imaginations to speak and act like this, in a city where the legal apparatus awaits their incarceration as public nuisances? How could they defy the nineteenth century sentimental regiment of childhood, unless that is they have never been inculcated in that regiment? Whether or not we say it is the children or Laffan herself we may say who has learned from its provisions, one potential answer lies in the unique system of education instituted in Ireland in the early nineteenth century.

In *The Irish Education Experiment* (1970), Donald Akenson investigates the Irish national system of education and the 'historical mystery' of its founding in 1831, considerably before the English (1870) and Scottish systems (1872). Taking literary studies and their establishment and early influences, the key Akenson says, lies in how the national Irish education system was inaugurated with three crucial background components: a lack of drastic social change; the hedge schools; and "the willingness of the bulk of the Irish

²⁷ As Carr will insist on, see Chapter 8.

²⁸ It is crucial to note how the *Cussen Report* (1936), the *Kennedy Report* (1970), and the findings of the *Task Force on Child Care Services* (1980) were three official narratives documenting widespread emotional neglect and varying degrees of physical abuse within the system of care. However, "It is only now, at the threshold of [fathers] being deprived of economic control and power, that the position of the father figure in the family becomes a scandal". (Haug 2001: 67) Bernadette Fahey's *Freedom of Angels* (1999), combined personal and historical details of the abuse of children with a political critique that, as Molino summarises it, the underlying issue was how the Irish church and state were "collaborating to criminalise poverty, and to use it as a justification for institutionalizing children in an attempt to control what was seen as the moral laxity of the Irish poor". (Molino 2001: 50)

common people to support popular educational institutions.” (Akenson 1970: 58)²⁹ The Irish school system of the early and mid-nineteenth century was not characterised by the utilitarian attitude designed for an industrialising economy made infamous by Dickens' character Gradgrind in *Hard Times* (1854).

The curriculum's content, according to one contemporary observer, had no direct bearing on the future career of the pupils. (Akenson 1970: 235) This was a deliberate means for limiting any development in the Irish economy through an industrially literate and educated population (if Arnold's remarks on the 'mystic Celt' made him much more attractive to critics, it also made him much less employable).³⁰ Nor was the curriculum dominated by reactionary political or religious reforms. At State level, competing political sectional interests organised on a sectarian divide became actually wary of upsetting the other religious group, at least in education.³¹ Catholic and Protestant influences held each other in check so that the Irish education system was relatively unregulated, and 'the local colour' of the hedgemaster tradition was relatively unchecked, meaning such teachers did find classrooms, although, as Akenson states, there can be no certainty over the figures.³²

²⁹ "Ireland underwent no industrial revolution, no significant urbanization, no breakdown in the agrarian order and family structure, and did not experience any of the other forms of social revolution that usually presage the creation of state systems of formal education. Thus, the question, 'why was the national system created at such an early date?' (Akenson 1970: 3).

³⁰ Arnold's epigrammatic preface to the published lectures, *On the study of Celtic Literature* (1867), was taken from MacPherson's *Ossian* (1765): "They went forth to war, but they always fell". The remark is redolent of the infant trying to walk, and always falling. MacPherson's work was translated into many European languages - Herder and the early Goethe were among its profound admirers - and thus MacPherson's infantilised Celt was implicated from the outset of the Romantic movement in European literature.

³¹ If sectarian debate could be unsparing, it mostly was conducted in public in the magazine periodicals beginning to circulate: "What voices there were were raised against each other. In the first three decades of the century, the only kind of magazine to flourish was political or religious." (Hayley 1987: 28)

³² The 'Central Model School' in Dublin was supposed to act as a training and clearing house for new teachers in the 'national system' around the country. However, as the Central Model School

was not operational until [1838] after the creation of the ordinary national system [in 1834], a "provisional" plan was implemented. As a consequence, many teachers' positions were filled with untrained aspirants on the grounds that they would receive the appropriate training at a later date. "But the provisional arrangement is nevertheless maintained to this day," the Powis, or Royal Commission, contended in its General Report of 1870, "and the persons summoned to Dublin for training continue to be teachers already in service called away from their schools for the purpose". Thus from the beginning and extending throughout the period, the system of training teachers was far from efficient.

(Mangione 2003: 105)

The Model School final influence over the school system, including Industrial Schools, may be gleaned in how male student teachers were instructed

In Carleton's *The Hedge School* (1844), Matt Kavanagh's listing of his classical learning is an entire page long, redounding to absurdity maybe, intrinsically meant to sound wonderful juggling a long list of Latin and Greek nouns. The list is designed to provoke curiosity and provide amusement to his pupils, parents, and Carleton's own readers. (Carleton 2002a: 296) Peasants from the days of the hedge schools were much more interested in learning than saintliness in the schoolmasters, and looked upon minor vices as a desirable sign of the master's humanity, vices which would not necessarily corrupt the children. (Akenson 1970: 56)³³ One hedge school education inquiry in Sligo in 1824 found children all reading aloud (befitting an oral culture), and simultancously, '*The Forty Thieves*', '*The Pleasant Art of Money-Catching*', the New Testament, and the mutiny act. (Akenson 1970: 53)³⁴

Take Laffan's trio in *Flitters* and compare them with the characters in the books being read by these children in a hedge school at Sligo - all of them thief, all are artists at money-catching (on the dock side), and all have mutinied (against the incarcerated position of the delinquent child, or the 'prison ship' of the reformatory system). The only item missing from the children's chatter and behaviour or misbehaviour is the New Testament. Laffan was very much against "the overweening influence" of the clergy on "the unformed mind" (Kahn 2005: 26) Laffan's trio in *Flitters* might agree, especially with how the clergy and

"in agriculture and land surveying at the model farm maintained at Glasnevin, while female student teachers were 'engaged in various useful employments in Household matters—Cleansing, Washing, Ironing, &c., &c.'" (Mangione 2003: 108)

Both activities occur at Artane Industrial School (1871-1969) in *The Game Hen*.

³³ Ó Ciosáin notes "the unwillingness of many teachers to enter the national system, since employment by the national board placed strict restrictions on a teacher's professional behaviour and social life." (Ó Ciosáin 1997: 51) This, along with the opposition of the Catholic Hierarchy, especially from John McHale, Archbishop of Tuam, meant the more controlled national system did not altogether dominate the education system even after 1834. Further, due to the difficulty of obtaining cheap books, "popular literature continued to be used in primary schools in Ireland, at least until the Great Famine, and in some places afterwards." (Ó Ciosáin 1997: 51) Finally, Ó Ciosáin also quotes from a report in 1868 from Patrick Keenan, the Chief Inspector of Schools, noting how "the circulation of such books has not ceased, for the Inspectors inform me that they frequently meet hawkers through the country with their knapsacks well charged with such books." (Ó Ciosáin 1997: 51)

³⁴ Such 'horizontal' forms of reading aloud (Ó Ciosáin's term), where material constraints meant that in a group of literates, some or all of whom wanted to read a text, one would read it aloud to the others", was frequent in Ireland from the 1820s onwards. (Ó Ciosáin 1997: 190) The children then would practice in school what would be expected in the home. By contrast, 'vertical' reading implies the literate reading to the illiterate, the learned to the unlearned, such as for church sermons, or even newspapers. "Such reading aloud could sometimes amount to a form of translation." (Ó Ciosáin 1997: 188)

middle-classes advocated the forced admittance of poor children to industrial schools such as Artane.³⁵

Also, Akenson outlines certain aspects of style in nineteenth century Irish school books (the Irish Readers) which distinguish them from more modern school texts.³⁶

The modern reader is apt to be struck by two things about the material in the books. The first of these is that the sentences through which the children learned to read were yeasty, interesting, but often lacking in taste: 'Snap bit a rat; its leg bled; it is in a trap; do not let it slip.' Second, one is struck by the fact that these sentences, although arranged in a paragraph were often merely a series of non sequiturs, with no story to give continuity. The following was typical: 'The beef is quite raw; will you roast it? A flail is used to part the grain from the straw.'
(Akenson 1970: 232)³⁷

Is this not Laffan - yeasty, interesting and lacking in 'taste' - such as opening her collection of stories with Flitters and a red herring in her mouth, "fallen from the dinner-bundle of a dock-labourer"? (Laffan 1876: 10) As well, the children's gambling, their stealing, their eating habits and preferred food (sheep's trotters and rolls, washed down by porter), all these too not yeasty, interesting and lacking in 'taste'.

Throughout the prose, May Laffan, always shy but dry and something like Flitters herself, narrates the story with a humorous, earthy tone with edited precision. Verbs have an

³⁵ Smith describes how the new Irish state further developed an array of institutions in an "architecture of containment" which "encompassed an array of interdependent institutions-- schools, hospitals, mother-and-baby homes, adoption agencies, and Magdalene laundries-- that obscured the less desirable elements attached to a number of interrelated social phenomena, including poverty, illegitimacy, and infanticide." (Smith 2001: 111) The architecture of containment was "expanded in function, to confine and render invisible segments of the population whose very existence threatened Ireland's national imaginary, the vision of Ireland enshrined in President Eamon de Valera's 1937 constitution." (Smith 2001: 111) As Smith describes, discussing Patrick McCabe's *The Butcher Boy* (1992), society's fear of scandal ran deep as after an encounter with a pederastic priest, Francie knew "they were going to let me go the first chance they got I was like a fungus growing on the walls they wanted them washed clean again". (McCabe 1993: 95)

³⁶ The Irish Readers were often hailed by the English educational establishment as superior to their English counterparts. Sales to England were voluminous, and even a "most significant testimonial to the books' high quality came from the English Committee of Council on Education" (Akenson 1970: 229). "In 1851 the royal commission on popular education in England was forced to admit, despite their disapproval of the Irish national school text, that they were the most popular and widely used set of books in England" (Akenson 1970: 230).

³⁷ The Akenson citation as an example of an *Irish Reader* is from the *First Book of Lessons for the Use of Schools* (Dublin, 1836: 11, 28). Children were to begin with the *First Book of Lessons* and to proceed up to the *Fifth Book of Lessons*. A specific age group in the student body did not correspond to a specific "Book-class", as advancement depended on accomplishing each "Book-class" in turn.

onomatopoeic quality, sometimes polished with wistfulness, 'wistful' being a favourite Laffan word. There is Laffan's glee in phrases such "dirty little dairy-shop," with its bouncing iambs and surprising adjective. (Laffan 1876: 52) Here is another example of Laffan splitting the reader between sentiment for a little dairy shop, and the less sentimental idea of it being covered in dirty. This is the same technique for describing Flitters with a red herring in her mouth. In the next paragraph, the verbs are "tossed... extricated... limped... trotted," with Tatters doing the trotting. (Laffan 1879: 17) However, soon after, the children are eating sheep's trotters. (Laffan 1882: 21) The gaiety of a child trotting along like a lamb would seem to obviate the possibility of the same child devouring the trotters of a lamb with fervid relish a few pages further on. Is this not a wonderful 'lacking in taste,' as Akenson describes it? Or is it the case that in this system of education "everything comes alive when contradictions accumulate." (Bachelard 1968: 39) Consider the children in the hedge school in Sligo simultaneously reading and hearing the law being broken by the forty thieves and a mutinous crew, yet the law being upheld in the New Testament and a book about making money.

Are these kinds of freedoms, as well as contradictions, not the freedoms the trio enjoy on the dockside? There is no dividing line separating the authentic from the inauthentic - the forty thieves are read alongside the twelve disciples. Then there is the non-separation of the private from the public, reading and performing aloud in public. The Counsellor is the literate, "ruling spirit of the trio" (Laffan 1882: 6), and I would suggest this spirit is not the spirit of the Model Schools or of the Christian Brothers, but the (Imaginary) inheritance of the first Irish Readers, alongside a hedge-master tradition of euphonic pedagogy. Or else, the "ruling spirit" among this trio of children is not the same 'Presiding Spirit' as that of the linnet.³⁸

This also may be how the trio resemble the trio of Phelim, the priest and the housekeeper in *Phelim O'Toole's Courtship* - "It is true I had read all those cheap amusing little works which were at the time the only reading book in the common schools, from *The Arabian Nights* downwards." (Carleton 1968: 73) Carleton and Phelim O'Toole enjoy a similar mobility of imagination as Laffan's trio, a happy imbroglio of imagination not precipitated around achieving a unique, sanctified-by-nature position of the father. Everyone might

³⁸ It is noteworthy how Flitters is so affected by Mrs. Kelly's infant, but Laffan contextualises her joy - Flitters enjoys the 'Presiding Spirit' of the infant so long as she might appear with the infant before Mrs. Carmody.

have access there, as Flitters, Tatters and the Counsellor can, or Phelim, the priest and Mrs. Doran the housekeeper, and so obtain their share of *jouissance*.

With these characters, irrespective of age, their "passion, though mainly histrionic like a child's play, an ambitious game, had moments of sincerity" (Yeats 1914: 84). Van Pelt describes how "the subject needs a mirror site or point of "histrionic entry" into any symbolic system of roles, and that indeed is ultimately the importance of being earnest, to enable entry into a symbolic system, but "lacking such a point of histrionic entry, the subject is unable to grasp what is symbolically expected of it." (Van Pelt 2000: 79) The position-as-child is not vouchsafed such entry or such moments of sincerity during play, which become moments of true privacy, when play that was arbitrary can communicate deep feeling. Such sincerity and privacy cannot be taught in a controlled way, there must be free play, and freedom to play. The disingenuousness of the position-as-child stems from the subject's blocked or stymied own entry into the Symbolic, but this is what Laffan's trio of actors enjoy with their achieved simplicity and tender comedies - independent entry into the Symbolic through their own imaginations, and this includes the love and devotion they share in their own family pattern.³⁹ Instead of sins, the trio have friends. Instead of guilt, they hear and delight in playing at voices. This is the joyful, antic disposition the children have to the authentic and inauthentic, to the private and the public. Crossing these 'barriers', barriers Oedipalised in bourgeois ideology, permits the children far too much *jouissance*, provoking envy.

The retardation of such imagination was of course a complex historical phenomena, however, one influence may be traced in the 'diplomacy' of the Intermediate Schools Commissioners. If non-interference for fear of sectarian rankling, recruiting and training limitations, the hedge-master tradition, and the Irish Readers permitted and stimulated an imaginative excellence, the national education system of funding began eventually to filter into teaching methodologies. This is Matthew Arnold reflecting on Irish education in *An Unregarded Irish Grievance* (1882),

Schools, therefore, were not to be founded or directly aided, because this might be an endowment of Catholicism; but a system of examination and prizes was established, whereby Catholic schools may indeed be aided indirectly. (Arnold 1891: 63)

³⁹ Ó Ciosáin has also identified, for similar reasons to the non-sectarian, non-political rationing of texts, "a corpus of popular literature... which strongly features chivalric romance and criminal biography... Chivalric romance, criminal biography and so on were popular lower-class reading material." (Ó Ciosáin 1997: 14, 15)

Arnold goes on to give extensive notice of a report, from 1879, by Professor Mahaffy of Trinity. His report on the state of schools in Ireland pronounced on the adverse effects of a system of funding tied to prize-giving. Mahaffy criticises the pedagogical style now developed by this system, where

... a hastily learned smattering suffices.. boys spend every leisure moment, and even part of their proper school-time, in learning little text-books... the boys are merely crammed in the appointed texts... the boys, even when not over-worked, were addled with a quantity of subjects. They are taught a great many valuable truths; but they have not assimilated them, and only answer by accident...

(cited Arnold 1891: 63)

Although Mahaffy is concerned with classical, elite teaching, the development is more general and illustrated in Laffan's writing by comparing the quick-witted imagination of the trio in *Flitters*, with the imagination, or lack thereof, of the middle-class children in *Hogan M.P.* In that novel, a prize-giving ceremony is shown as an insipid exercise in rote learning, and the prize-giving ceremony is itself corrupt.

Whereas the *Irish Readers* facilitated original composition and "set out to facilitate written composition, teaching writing through the use of model sentences" (Lyons 2006: 93)⁴⁰, and the older system with its more ad hoc funding was less pedagogically formal, the trickle-down Imaginary promoted by the national Education Commission funding system was epitomised by formality and prize-giving. A vertical hierarchy of readers is wanted whereby a single, winning voice realises a rewarded movement between private imagination and the public space of a prize ceremony.⁴¹ The arrangement engenders an anxiety of influence both in the child's mind as well as a school's budgetary and teaching ethos.⁴² Education and society at large increasingly distinguish their own populations through a competitive Imaginary supplicating the voice of a prize-dispensing master.

⁴⁰ From the imaginative possibilities permitted by Irish Reader textbooks, Lyons argues there were "special consequences for literary work", for instance, in the course of Yeats. (Lyons 2006: 94) Yeats was "himself an exemplary nineteenth century Irish child of the [Irish] Readers". (Lyons 2006: 98)

⁴¹ A prize-winning ethos promotes one child on stage in one 'special acting place' - the others are superfluous - compare this with Denis in the O'Shaughnessy family and Friel's stage directions in *Molly Sweeney* specifying how each character has a 'special acting area'. (Friel 1999: 455)

⁴² Such a prize-winning ethic structuring school life is important in Carleton's *Going to Maynooth*, as well as Edna O'Brien's *The Country Girls Trilogy*. The Model Schools were designed to operate so that "from all the National schools in the neighbourhood of each district model school, a certain number of the most deserving pupils be annually selected after public examination by the superintendent, and be admitted as free scholars into the district model school". (Mangione 2003: 115) This movement up means Maynooth for Denis O'Shaughnessy, or a fee-paying convent school in Dublin for Caitheleen Brady.

The result is that in *Hogan M.P.*, in Commons Lane, and Artane, a prescribed vanishing of the position of the child in romance, the fetish of the voiceless infant, and industrial schools becomes the ideological *aphanasis* of the subject of desire in a father-occluded Imaginary. In *Hogan M.P.*, or indeed Moore's *Esther Waters*, a woman in a sense is quite simply betting on her lover, and the prize of love and happiness was one of chance, and never within her control. Woman and schoolchildren must endure 'silent conversations' with their 'beloved' masters. This vanishing act (of the signifier), is made in the specific interest of a middle-class determined to assert its own privileged access to the signifier and its own structure of desire in its arbitrary division of the private and public. Privacy will be a vanishing quality except for those who can afford privacy (in the suburbs for preference).

In *The Game Hen*, the poor are left fertility and the flesh of the infant as their only 'natural' privacy and wealth - the private was vouchsafed *only* by the presence of the infant. In *Flitters*, the right of children or the Irish generally as born actors to play with the boundary between the private and public is being undermined. The two effects are linked for without acting, there can be no privacy or sincerity.

Those in the position-as-child are bound over to a compulsory "diffidence and unwillingness to intrude on [the] privacy" of 'adults'. (Laffan 1876: 31) Those in the position-as-child shall not play with a specified middle-class fantasy of adult privacy, and infantile non-privacy, lest they be abjected in the primal scene into a public space beyond

Control over intermediate and tertiary education, including the possibility of an endowed Catholic University as a sop to Catholic and Home Rule agitation were huge controversies in Laffan's time, and both fed into the all-important question of the land and Home Rule. The possible extension of the franchise in Ireland was attracting resistance, including feverish attacks by Randolph Churchill on Parnell:

Speaking on a resolution to the Borough Franchise (Ireland) Bill, [Churchill] opposed the extension of the borough franchise to Ireland because it would 'return men to Parliament pledged to the Repeal of the Union, the disintegration of the Empire ... and the most revolutionary ideas as to the possession of the land'. Parnell, Lord Randolph claimed, 'drew his support from the mob', who were composed 'almost entirely of the ignorant, idle, and drunken'. He also questioned 'whether the lower class of the Irish were as intelligent, as well educated, and as fully entitled to the franchise as the same class in England'. (Chambers 2006: 29)

Bringing education to such a 'mob' might only incite revolutionary ideas among the populace. However, a pedagogy inspired by disciplined Catholicism and the vertigo of prizes might structure desire around the voice of a master. The same speaker, Randolph Churchill, made the following, perceptive, comment in October 1885:

It is the bishops entirely to whom I look in future to mitigate or postpone the Home Rule onslaught. Let us only be enabled to occupy a year with the education question. By that time I am certain Parnell's party will have become seriously disintegrated. Personal jealousies, Government influences, Davitt and Fenian intrigues, will be at work upon the devoted band of eighty. The bishops, who in their hearts hate Parnell, and don't care a scrap for Home Rule, having safely acquired control of Irish education, will, according to my calculation, complete the rout." (Churchill 1906: 4)

the family.⁴³ In *The Game Hen*, the middle-class with their primal scene are taking over the streets - only a voiceless infant, who could never anyway disturb their privacy by making or recording a representation becomes the exception to the rule. However, Flitters, Tatters and the Counsellor cannot 'suffer' such abjection by their choice of lifestyle outside a normative, middle-class family structure, and so are beyond the trauma structure of the middle-class myth of privacy. One response will be Artane and its ilk, where in the serried ranks of industrial schooling, children can re-learn the joy of privacy by utterly losing all privacy.

In *Flitters*, an Irish girl child who lies and lives by her wits outside a normal family structure is killed. In *Baubie Clark*, part of the same collection of short stories, a more circumspect, Scottish girl who prevaricates with adults but does not lie outright, and who if she survives by singing on the streets, like Flitters, is devoted to her father, survives. The position-as-child is killed for telling lies.

The position-as-child is defined and excluded from the fiction constructing its demesne of being, the signifier, on pain of death. Deception is the characteristic feature moving the position-as-child to the *femme fatale*, and while Foster in Carleton's *The Black Doctor* successfully negotiates and manipulates the crossover, Flitters, Mary Bruin in Yeats's *Land of Heart's Desire*, Caithleen Brady in O'Brien's *The Country Girls*, as well as many of Carr's protagonists, all will lie in the position-as-child, and all will die.

⁴³ The myth of the 'primal scene' is "a picture of sexual intercourse between the boy's parents in a posture especially favourable for certain observations." (*The History of an Infantile Neurosis*; Freud 1995: 422)

Chapter 3 - W. B. Yeats

The Land of Heart's Desire (1894) is, as it insists, about the land and about desire. In 1896, two years after the play was written, Yeats characterised himself as

an Irish poet, looking to my own people for my ultimate best audience and trying to express the things that interest them and which will make them care for the land in which they live. (cited Gould 2001: xvi)

In *The Land of Heart's Desire*, there happen to be two Irish poets, a priest, Father Hart, and The Child. These two poets both look to Mary Bruin for their best audience and try to express the things that should interest her and which will make her care for the land in which she lives - with either a Catholic or a Yeatsian imagination. In this chapter, I will discuss how *The Land of Heart's Desire* is Yeats's Revivalist framing of a battle between a priest's voice and a Child's voice, a battle for supremacy over the voice of desire which speaks through the land.¹

Having recently married Shawn, Mary Bruin has moved to the Bruin household headed by Maurteen Bruin. There, Mary languishes in boredom, plagued by the demands of housework coming from her mother-in-law, Bridget. Both Shawn and Maurteen are part of the emerging 'strong' farmer' section of Catholic society, the kind of men who enjoy dreaming on the "stocking full of yellow guineas / Hidden away where nobody can find it." (Yeats 2001: 70) The play's basic arrangement of character and setting is part of "a Yeatsian tradition figuring normative marriage as a metaphor for political quiescence," as in *Cathleen ni Houlihan* (1902). (Backus 1999: 179) The play can also function as a rudimentary critique of the Union between Ireland and Great Britain, with Mary Bruin as an allegorical figure of Ireland who is seduced by a more pragmatic lad, only then to become entrapped in the political economy of chiding in-laws.²

A pattern of strife between newly weds and in-laws living under one roof - the 'stem family' pattern of maintaining two different generation households in the one house - was increasingly a feature of Irish society from the latter half of the nineteenth century well into the twentieth century. Mary is clearly meant to "serve a sort of apprenticeship at the

¹ I am using the 1912 edition Yeats had altered for the Abbey Theatre where the stage platform comes out in front of the curtain. The 1912 edition made the curtain fall before Father Hart's final words, so as Father Hart "remains outside the curtain and the words are spoken to the audience like an epilogue." (Yeats 1912: 47) Father Hart is then also like Prospero.

² A path to romance comparable with Maire and Yolland in Friel's play, *Translations* (1980).

hands of the mother-in-law... during the young woman's childbearing years the older one maintains her control". (Arensberg and Kimball 1968: 120) While every day Bridget is "up at dawn to mend and scour", Bridget complains that Mary is "doubled over" a book full of legends. (Yeats 2001: 65) This book is an old book, and the reader is informed it was bound fifty years previously by Maurteen's grandfather who "killed a heifer for the binding". (Yeats 2001: 65-66) Shawn rebukes Bridget for chiding Mary, "Mother, you are too cross," but the rebuke must be in a tepid tone because then Bridget rounds on Shawn, "You've married her, and fear to vex her and so take her part". (Yeats 2001: 66) The Irish home the play introduces is a divided house, and Bridget's rancour against Mary's dreamy reading sets the stage.

Bridget is clearly the most unhappy - her envy even rises at the priest, Father Hart, free "to ride abroad in the boisterous night... pyx and blessed bread under your arm." (Yeats 2001: 66) Maurteen in his turn is much more mild with Mary's apparent laziness, and is content to say to Father Hart,

But do not blame [Mary] greatly; she will grow
As quiet as a puff-ball in a tree
When but the moons of marriage dawn and die
For half a score of times. (Yeats 2001: 66)

Father Hart chimes in with his own lyrical prognosis of Mary's bad behaviour, "Their hearts are wild / As be the hearts of birds, till children come". (Yeats 2001: 66) Bridget meanwhile is still intent on reminding priest and husband that Mary refuses to "even lay the knives and spread the cloth." (Yeats 2001: 66) At this point, Maurteen turns on Shawn, and just as Bridget feels humiliated with her "little round of deeds and days" (a picturesque understatement of her workload), so must Shawn for delaying to fetch a bottle of wine, part of a collection from "a Spaniard wrecked at Ocris Head",³

What are you waiting for?
You must not shake it when you draw the cork;
It's precious wine, so take your time about it.
(Yeats 2001: 66)

However, as much as Maurteen is head of the family and willing to bully Shawn, he apparently is unwilling to physically separate Mary from the book she reads in their midst.

³ God's "little round of deeds and days" -- this too was the Artane philosophy of the kindergarten.

Rather, the need is to 'persuade' Mary, and this task specifically is the role of Father Hart. Maurteen prompts Father Hart to speak with Mary, "Just speak your mind." (Yeats 2001: 67) Father Hart advises Mary not to "fill your head with foolish dreams", then foolishly asks her what she is reading. (Yeats 2001: 67) Mary reads to them how,

A daughter of a king of Ireland, heard
 A voice singing on a May Eve like this
 And followed half awake and half asleep,
 Until she came to the Land of Faery,
 Where nobody gets old and godly and grave,
 Where nobody gets old and crafty and wise,
 Where nobody gets old and bitter of tongue.
 And is still there, busied with a dance
 Deep in the dewy shadow of a wood,
 Or where stars walk upon a mountain-top.
 (Yeats 2001: 67)

Maurteen then turns to Father Hart and becomes more demanding, "Persuade the colleen to put down the book". (Yeats 2001: 67) Father Hart then says,

Put it away, my colleen;
 God spreads the heavens above us like great wings
 And gives a little round of deeds and days,
 And then come wrecked angels and set snares...
 For it was some wrecked angel, blind with tears,
 Who flattered Edain's heart with merry words.
 My colleen, I have seen other girls
 Restless and ill at ease, but years went by
 And they grew like their neighbours and were glad
 In minding children, working at the churn,
 And gossiping of weddings and of wakes; (Yeats 2001: 67)

The two men in the role of the good father are there to persuade Mary to put down the book, and what Maurteen and Father Hart clearly conjure up is their own brand of lyricism contesting and hopefully displacing the lyricism in Mary's book. By this the men hope to prove they are not 'bitter of tongue', and do not require to vex Mary such as Bridget vexes her. Father Hart takes up the word 'wrecked' Maurteen used for describing the Spanish ship, using the word in "wrecked angels" and "wrecked angel". In the scene, Father Hart and Maurteen are carefully confirming and affirming the language and advice of the other - the action of their voice as object is to reflect the other, as a look in a mirror.

Also, the latent content of the two men's lyricism is similar and quite clear - Mary needs to "grow" pregnant, and with haste in the ten ("half-score") lunar months Maurteen counts up. Impregnating Mary is a fantasy, a self-gratifying notoriety shared between them.

This Catholic priest, like his name-sake Father O'Hart in *The Ballad of Father O'Hart* (1888), would also no doubt be "a man of books" who has bidden women to "give over their keening", as Father O'Hart does in the *Ballad*. (Yeats 1990: 48)⁴ Irish women had an ancient role of public lamentation, or keening, a role whereby "death is as much women's responsibility as birth is". (Bourke 1993: 160) The role, which was "regarded as essential to the honour of the dead person", increasingly from the mid-seventeenth century came into "conflict with the (male) Catholic clergy" who denigrated the custom as "heathenish" and "savage". (Bourke 1993: 161) A public, mourning female voice was repressed by the Catholic clergy and in *The Land of Heart's Desire*, yet another female voice is in conflict with the same Catholic clergy.

Also in the *Ballad*, Father O'Hart's books "were the works of John". (Yeats 1990: 48)⁵ Given this and Father Hart's penchant for imagery such as, "God spreads the heavens above us like great wings", the allusion is clearly to John Milton. A similar image occurs at the beginning of *Paradise Lost*,

Instruct me, for thou know'st; thou from the first
Wast present, and, with mighty wings outspread,
Dove-like sat'st brooding on the vast Abyss,
And mad'st it pregnant...

(*Paradise Lost*, Book 1.19-22, italics mine)

To Yeats, Father Hart's imagination is influenced from Milton, a Puritan pamphlet writer, politician and poet with a notorious position in Irish history.⁶ Like Milton and his God, Maurteen and Father Hart are both impelled to impregnate the Abyss, only now Mary's desiring body contains the Abyss. Unbound by motherhood, Mary is the 'it', the abyss, or

⁴ The role arises again in Chapter 8 discussing Marina Carr as a modern lament poet of Ireland.

⁵ Howes also draws attention to how the poem casts Father O'Hart's relation to the people as "politically ambiguous" - while Father O'Hart is "much beloved by the country people", he is also an "agent of imperialism." (Howes 2006: 223) Howes correctly adds that "Yeats's criticisms of the alliance between Church and state were anti-clerical but not anti-theological." (Howes 1996: 141)

⁶ Milton's pamphlet of 1649, *Articles of Peace, Made and Concluded with the Irish Rebels* is now seen as a blueprint for the reconquest of Ireland by Cromwell (Raymond 2004: 315). Milton's mighty wings might symbolise English arms over the abyss of Ireland when "Irish demons were springing from English imaginations" (Maley 2002: 517). In Yeats' imagination "the Irish maintained their especial quality precisely to the degree that they had remained loyal to those old beliefs and that old eloquence which had formerly characterised the seventeenth century English." (Deane 1985: 48) The Puritan imagination of Milton has been crucial in challenging and destroying the old Elizabethan order Yeats associated with Ireland. Yeats was always prepared to manipulate "for his own imaginative purpose two Englands of the mind, 'Merry England' and an England of the Puritan and the merchant." (Watson 2006: 39) However, Yeats in his speech on divorce in the Senate still praised Milton as a "great man" winning rights through strife in true Protestant style.

that which must be made pregnant by their patriarchal order of imagination. Yet while Mary is like a wild bird, Maurteen and Father Hart, with their "great wings" outspread, are more like tense, domestic, brooding birds.

The manner in which these two old men conduct their fantasy before Mary is simply vulgar. The family patriarch and priest purvey Mary's fertility in front of Bridget and Shawn as if wife and son were not there. Their focus on Mary's womb as the object of their fantasy becomes a stake for Bridget's hysterics, especially now Bridget's biological fertility is over. Mary's womb is treated as if it is a public good belonging to her father-in-law and the priest - and Shawn merely the vehicle for their pleasure, just as for the wine from the Spanish wreck. Indeed, Maurteen sending Shawn out of the room for the wine betrays a guilt and pleasure - how Maurteen commands Shawn to be careful with the 'cork' is all the richer for hinting at Maurteen's guilty pleasure. (Yeats 2001: 66)⁷ As well, Shawn returns exactly when Maurteen mentions him again. Maurteen speaks to the son and Shawn disappears, then Maurteen speaks of Shawn and Shawn appears - the son is entirely dominated by the father even at the level of enunciation. By contrast, the only authority and urgency of voice ceded to Bridget is vexing Shawn and Mary.

Maurteen in fact shows very little respect for his wife, never mind affection. He speaks of 'my wife' to Father Hart when Bridget is there beside them, and shouts at her, "Hush, woman, hush!" (Yeats 2001: 70) Soon after he adds, to Mary,

My Colleen, have not Fate and Time and Change
Done well for me and for old Bridget *there*?
(Yeats 2001: 70, italics mine)

The irony is appalling - fate, time and change have made of Bridget an unappreciated woman, destroyed with constant work, provoked now with their puerile sexual fantasies over Mary. Bridget must be content to be insulted with the pretentious pleasantries concerning "Fate and Time and Change" sending good fortune to "old Bridget *there*", a woman who is nigh invisible except for the dust and dirt she removes. In this household, only the fertile are visible, and the infertile are given to vexation and become vexing.

Bridget ignores these fantasies except by her hysteric chiding of Mary and Shawn, while Mary offers nothing in return. There seems however no possibility, or voice, by which the

⁷ If Yeats claimed, "I would have poetry turn its back upon all that modish curiosity, psychology", there are still psychological jokes barely beneath the surface of his lyrics. (Yeats 2001: 24-25)

two women could either complain of or refuse motherhood. Bridget had previously complained of Mary,

We should be deafened by her groans and moans
Had she to work as some do, Father Hart... (Yeats 1912: 10)

Bridget with her screeching voice is in conflict with Mary's lyric voice, and it is as if Bridget relishes the coming labour pangs and labours of motherhood approaching Mary, pangs which will bring a new voice on Mary, groaning and moaning with the pleasures of sex to begin, then bringing the groaning and moaning of a life of domestic drudgery. Bridget's vexing is laden with a sadistic anticipation of Mary's passage to motherhood.

Bridget's accusation of Shawn being "feared" to "vex" Mary can also be read as Shawn's fear to 'sex' Mary, a fear signed by Mary's lack of pregnancy (even this early in marriage). Shawn's mother has little deference towards her son precisely because fertility is all that signifies sexuality, and Shawn is only a child in all their eyes till this is so, and Mary becomes pregnant. Hence Shawn's voice, though he is married and a grown man physically, has no authority.

In a lyric imagination, lines have "the logic and the finery [to] be relished as soon as seen... always to make a chain of interesting signifiers, with the 'message' tucked in as best the poet can". (Vendler 1997: 8, 17) The internal rhyme between vex and wrecked, between vexing speech and wrecked angels, is suggestive of an unspoken fate for the female sex. This fate is to labour in kitchens over children and men, and then to vex and so become like wrecked angels (angels were sexless). The labile meanings of sounds falling in error between sex and vex help construct the play as a vexed wreckage of sexual desire.

This displaced rhyme of sex with vex and wrecked signifies the displaced physical and public desire of Mary, would "*put her arms about Shawn, but looks shyly at the priest and lets her arms fall.*" (Yeats 2001: 72) Libido in Catholic domesticity is meant solely to underwrite household labour and fertility and within that regime of desire, domestic labour and fertility become the cross and Cross of women.⁸

⁸ Any confusion between the two, "a substitution of the image of woman [labouring] for the Christian symbol of the cross" is blasphemy – making God desirable, and no longer God." (Bracher 1994: 193) Feminine *jouissance* is both farthest away from and closest to blasphemy. Compare Bridget's role with the behaviour of Mrs. Doran, the priest's housekeeper in *Phelim O'Toole's Courtship*, who is also called Bridget, but her name is shortened to Biddy. Biddy enjoys herself as much as any for a short time anyway: "I know it's foolish of me; but we all

So too, the knives and cloth Mary will not set on the table are a symbolic allusion to Mary's fear of being eaten in sacrament, her desiring body sacrificed in a Eucharist of domesticity (in a cannibal, father-occluded Imaginary). The "house [is] never a mere setting, but a coded set of instructions as to how its occupants should behave". (Kiberd 1996: 376) The play does converge around containing Mary's excess desire to read, to feel desire in her body, and to express that desire with Shawn, including in public. How her desire straddles the literary and sexual⁹ is key to how Maurteen will not interfere with the book and simply throw it away, or burn it. Maurteen's request to Father Hart, to "Persuade the colleen to put down the book," has a pun on putting down a rebellious animalism. Maurteen is anxious about these influences, which are part of his own memory - "My grandfather would mutter just such things," he says defensively. (Yeats 2001: 67) But Maurteen also says of his grandfather how "he was no judge of a dog or a horse". (Yeats 2001: 67) Husbandry in this house is now more or less based on animal husbandry, and yet Mary's reading brings an uncanny voice from Maurteen's past he is neither at liberty to forget, or enjoy.

Domestic relations exist to eventually fix Mary in a mother position, but Maurteen has now turned to a priest for persuading Mary to put down the book, abandoning Bridget in the parental relation functioning to define and exclude the child. Bridget's role of mother is suspended – the priest is now in a normalising mother position. The voice of the mother need not be female, and the fantasmatic role of the mother is as much to impregnate the daughter as that of the father. Bridget clearly relishes the prospect of Mary pregnant with a sadistic glee, and perhaps that is how Bridget has failed in the role of mother, for not disguising better the pains of labour. Father Hart will now be more gentle, and more lyrical. Like some gossip, he reminds Mary how good it will be to enjoy the "gossiping of weddings and wakes." (Yeats 2001: 67) Father Hart even 'vexes' Maurteen a little after Maurteen mistakenly says there is no child outside. When The Child takes milk from Mary, Father Hart says to Maurteen, "That will be the child / That you would have it was no child at all." (Yeats 2001: 69) Father Hart arrives to play the role of an intelligent, and lyrical sort of mother, but for the same outcome, to corral Mary in the pains of labour.

Whereas Father Hart and Maurteen evidently enjoy being languorous and lazy, such as calling forth the wine, using Shawn as a servant, yet Mary is harshly criticised for her own

have our failins, and to be fond of Phelim there, is mine." (Carleton 2002b: 214) Biddy is allowed her failings.

⁹ As would the fiction of Edna O'Brien, discussed in Chapter 5.

languorous pleasure at reading. Mary cannot be permitted such freedom as to follow her own desire, for what is possession of her womb and by extension the Law of the Father to place flesh on the signifier as it sees fit, which means ten months after a wedding.

Yeats is a poet and dramatist who is always imagining a grandiloquent and languorous voice as a beautiful object. In *The Land of Heart's Desire*, Maurteen and Father Hart consider a beautiful voice should be their own exclusive possession, as much their own as Mary's womb or the yellow guineas, and theirs is a voice taken from Milton. The antagonism towards Mary and even Maurteen's apprehension concerns Mary's voice, and the quality of this voice as an object is what blunts and yet inflames both Maurteen and Father Hart. The appearance of a beautiful voice as object in Mary provokes a crisis which must be foreclosed. This voice *is* Mary's being, being open to desire. All the two men wish to hear speak from a woman is her womb, speaking through the Law of the Father placing flesh on the signifier and covering over desire, in the name of a father.

Like Yeats' own voice, the voice of Irish, Catholic hegemony had its own Romantic and lyrical aspirations, but let a women take a vexing voice. Mary's voice instead is beautiful, even as it speaks of the godly and grave, the crafty and wise, and the bitter of tongue, a description which fits them exactly. Mary can voice what is grave and bitter without her voice becoming grave and bitter, or vexing.¹⁰

In the play, Mary exists in a liminal space between mother *or* child. The alternative to Mary as mother is as a frightened young girl child hiding under the bedclothes:

She's dull when my big son is in the field,
And that and maybe this good woman's tongue
Have driven her to hide among her dreams,
Like children from the dark under the bed-clothes.
(Yeats 2001: 68)

"The subject needs a mirror or point of 'histrionic entry' into any Symbolic system of roles" - the only entry point for Mary in the Symbolic system is either mother, or if that is refused, the position-as-child. (Van Pelt 2000: 79) There exists nothing outside being a

¹⁰ For a voice to imitate what it describes, that is for a voice to hold up a mirror to nature, is an element of a father-occluded Imaginary where the voice's form follows content and function - Yeats of course despised such aesthetics. For instance, the vexing voice of the woman is equally the vexing voice of an infant, and an infant is all that is given to women to sexualise them in Catholic patriarchy. Form follows content follows function.

mother or being positioned as a child, except a rebarbative struggle for recognition as a subject of desire.

In the 1890s, "the problem [of emigration] could be blamed on British mis-rule in Ireland; after more than twenty years of self-government, this excuse began to lose credibility." (Daly 1997: 206) The on-going practice of two families living under one roof became seen as inhibiting marriage itself, so that, in 1943, De Valera set up a committee to investigate government subsidies for second dwelling-houses on farms. (Clear 2000: 44) Friction on "the theme of strife between mother- and daughter-in-law is one dear to the hearts of the countrymen", and it would seem - De Valera's committee did recognise the problem "with two generations of adults, *particularly woman*, under one roof" (Clear 2000: 44, italics mine) - also to be a source of amusement among government ministers. (Arensberg and Kimball 2001: 123)¹¹ The inauguration of such a committee had stemmed from emigration figures which, to the government's embarrassment, even increased in post-independence Ireland, yet the committee still decided against intervention through grants for second homes. A second dwelling house on farms could still, one hundred years after the Famine, prompt fears in Irish government of the bane of Famine Ireland, the subdivision of small landholdings. In the area of Sligo, "No myths need to be found to underline the impact of the Famine... through much of his life, Yeats lived cheek by jowl with the social consequences of the Famine." (Day 2006: 115, 116) The trauma of the Famine and the rejection of subdivision or two dwelling houses on farms marks Yeats's play in 1894 and still haunted De Valera's committee in 1943, in the prevalence of patterns of household life such as that of the Bruin family.

At the time of Yeats writing the play in 1894, Irish female emigration exceeded male emigration, at 53.8 per cent of the total, a figure well above the European average at around 30 per cent. (Akenson 2001:161-162; Diner 2001: 174) Commentators trace this distinctive pattern of movement back to the shock of the Irish Famine rearranging patterns of family life - in the 1830s, female emigration stood at 35 per cent. (Diner 2001: 174) There is no doubt that in post-Famine Ireland, late nineteenth century female migration does stand out as truly exceptional in European experience. (Connolly 2002: 27) Yeats' play could just as well be considered a post-Famine meditation on Irish female emigration

¹¹ No women served on the committee or were consulted during the investigation. In general, the public representatives of women, like the Irish Housewives Association, were "greeted with either derision or suspicion", and if feminist issues were becoming more pressing, "it was precisely because [women] were so visible that they were silenced." (Clear 2000: 67)

in a period of Catholic consolidation and life, particularly for women, marked by frustrated desire and overwork.

Amidst an unsettled rural existence after the Famine, amid the Land Question, the politics of Home Rule, and political violence dominating the political agenda and countryside, a fairy Child comes on May Eve. In a period of crisis over political representation, Yeats chose the pleasures of allegory and a child to embody his politics. Political or otherwise, any crisis of representation is a crisis of pleasure, and Yeats is a poet and dramatist who chose the pleasure of beautiful voices to engage with Ireland's crisis of representation, in what Yeats believed was a voice true to the land of Ireland. The Child is a Yeatsian symbol of such a voice carrying in it desire in the heart of the land. The play's dramatic effect depends on 'The Child' creating a strange, beguiling stage presence. Katherine Worth highlights the whimsy but also the dramatic depth necessary for the role of The Child:

the child becomes The Child, a being set apart precisely by the qualities that might mark a young dancer, childishness and self-possessed virtuosity; in the stage character they are mixed and exaggerated to the point where they become uncanny. (Worth 1978: 15)¹²

The Child dances outside the house and then, after being invited in and coaxing Bridget into giving her milk and honey, she asks for the crucifix to be put away, "that ugly thing on the black cross". (Yeats 2001: 75) She then dances and sings the song, 'The lonely heart is withered away', and after the song, Maurteen gives her a ribbon, and when asked by the Child does he love her, Maurteen says, "Yes, I love you." (Yeats 2001: 77) The Child has wonderful and yet gentle powers of seduction.

However, once The Child reveals how old she is, "much older than the eagle-cock / That blinks and blinks on Ballygawley Hill", the family become frightened. (Yeats 2001: 77) Bridget and Maurteen "*gather behind the priest for protection.*" (Yeats 2001: 77) Instead of 'the child' disappearing into nostalgic oblivion at the end of the play (Kiberd complains about Yeats finding "relief amidst the scenes of childhood memory", fending off the "murderousness" of the land; Kiberd 1996: 105), the position-as-child suddenly and definitively *appears* on stage, gripping the priest's vestments, as if Bridget and Maurteen would climb into the 'womb' of Mother Church. In *Can we go Back into Our Mother's*

¹² Yeats's attention to The Child's dance is part of, as Aries describes it, an older European tradition of very young children learning to dance, such as how Louis XIII "at the age of three danced the galliard, the saraband and the old bourrée." (Aries 1973: 78) Children shared the same dances as adults, and dancing itself "was more important than it is today" (Aries 1973: 198)

Womb? (1907), written after the *Playboy* riots and addressed to the Gaelic League, Synge anticipated a writer coming in Ireland to "teach Irishmen that they have wits to think, imaginations to work miracles, and souls to possess with sanity." (cited Murray 1997: 87) Yeats aimed to be this writer, and Synge's hoped for wit, imagination and soul did not lie inside a priest's vestment harbouring a womb.

Now the crucifix has been put away, The Child is

so mighty that there's none can pass,
Unless I will it, where my feet have passed
Or where I've whirled my finger-tips. (Yeats 2001: 78)

Shawn tries to approach The Child, but cannot. The symbolism is about how those who feel love for The Child will be able to move to The Child.¹³ Maureen cries out:

Look! Look!
There something stops him – look how he moves his hands
As though he rubbed them on a wall of glass!
(Yeats 1912: 37)¹⁴

The Child puts her arm around Mary, as Mary was want to do with Shawn, and now Shawn commands Mary to "Awake out of that trance - and cover up / Your eyes and ears." (Yeats 2001: 78) Catholic modesty is not only in the visual but the aural plane. Since the Council of Trent, the Church had toiled over intelligibility (and interpretability) versus voice. The eventual orthodoxy sought to "pin down the voice to the letter, to limit its disruptive force, to dissipate its inherent ambiguity." (Dolar 1996: 22) That ambiguity in Yeats, Beckett and Joyce reached brilliant new heights of euphony, polysemy, and homonymy.¹⁵

The Child does not command but makes a promise, "I will keep you in the name of your own heart." (Yeats 2001: 79)¹⁶ The priest goes to retrieve the crucifix, but Maureen and

¹³ See Figure Three, note 61

¹⁴ As in *The Tempest*, Act 3, Scene 3. Alonso, Sebastian, and Antonio draw swords on Prospero, which he mocks. "You fools! I and my fellows / Are ministers of fate... My fellow ministers / Are like invulnerable. If you could hurt, / Your swords are now too massy for your strengths / And will not be uplifted." The three "stand amazed," frozen in action by the command of Prospero's voice.

¹⁵ Euphony, polysemy and homonymy stylise the discourses of the hysteric, the analyst and the master in the aural - do I sound like a man or a woman; do I sound like the Other; do you all sound like me?

¹⁶ This is opposite to the promise of the coloniser. The coloniser promises, "you give me the pleasures of your body and land, and I will be yours." The Child promises, "I give you the

Bridget both do not allow him, thus betraying their son and daughter-in-law, and the absence of love in them. Mary then says, "I will go with you." (Yeats 2001: 79) The Child calms Mary as she departs from Shawn, "White bird, white bird, come with me, little bird... Come little bird, with crest of gold... Come little bird, with silver feet!" (Yeats 2001: 80) When Mary Bruin then dies on the stage, Bridget's authority finally comes to the fore. Pre-Catholic rites of mourning were conducted most by woman, and Bridget does conduct a form of grievance, but not one which does honour to the dead. Bridget is the one to pitilessly dismiss the body of Mary as an image.

Come away from that image; body and soul are gone.
You have thrown your arms about a drift of leaves,
Or bole of an ash tree changed into her image.
(Yeats 1912: 44)¹⁷

Should some true representation of childhood have perished with Mary, an audience might expect sentimentality, but Shawn, her husband, is commanded not to mourn by his mother. Instead of keening, Bridget commands her son to leave the body in a cruel, bitter inversion of a traditional role for women.

"Come away from that image" also echoes the line in *The Stolen Child*, "Come away, O human child!" Mary Bruin is the human child, but in the Bruin household Mary Bruin is only a perverse child who did not deserve mourning. She symbolises a pagan past, one that did not have the fertile as its Real and a culture where fertility is the exclusive basis of *jouissance* for women.

The presence of desire in *The Child* has provoked hysteria, and the hysteric "visualises his experiences to the point of living scenic fictions and of finding the equivalent of acting in language". (Rudelic 1993: 222) The infant in the womb is the dominant 'animated image' in the unconscious of Catholic Ireland and the Law of the Father. The foetus as pre-eminent flesh of the Law of the Father proved itself to be one critical example of the "pastoral techniques of government that originally developed within the Church." (Bevir

pleasures of my land, and you will be mine." The promises are something like complementary opposites. The Child thus speaks like a native. While the native promises, "I will keep you in the name of your own heart", the coloniser's promise has the underside, "I will keep you in the name of my own heart", meaning the coloniser's position of the father.

¹⁷ In *Ephemera* (1884), Yeats writes of a pair of lovers whose passion has worn out. "Turning, he saw that she had thrust dead leaves / Gathered in silence, dewy as her eyes, / In bosom and hair." (Yeats 1999: 41) A silence and dead leaves symbolise for Yeats the passing of life and passion.

1999: 351)¹⁸ In this regime, Maurteen and Bridget's behaviour is rational (the Real is rational), for under threat of extinction or damnation, they act out their true desire, to go back into a womb hidden beneath the priest's outer garments. Maurteen and Bridget *do* find the equivalent of the child in a living scenic fiction, and enact it out by hiding behind the priest. The priest responds by staying where he is to mollify them as good children, sacrificing desire in the voice and the body of Mary, left dead on stage.

The voice as object turns alterity towards sense in both an Imaginary plenitude and foundational (Symbolic) lack, but the latter is barred by patriarchy except as it supplements the voice of the father. The voice of the father is not an "altogether different species from the feminine voice", but the same object voice "which cleaves and bars the Other [signifier] in an ineradicable 'extimacy'". (Dolar 1996: 27)

If the Law, the word, the logos, had to constantly fight the voice as the other, the senseless bearer of *jouissance*, feminine decadence, it could do so only by implicitly relying on that other voice, the voice of the Father accompanying the Law. Ultimately, we don't have the battle of "logos" against the voice, but *the voice against the voice*. (Dolar 1996: 27)

The drama of Yeats's play is the clash of two voices, when one voice sees fit to consciously coerce the voice and desire of the other, and to deny the ineradicable extimacy of desire itself, to sanctify a father-occluded Imaginary forcing the Abyss to become pregnant with the sanctified flesh of the father. Politically, the Child for Yeats represents an Irish sociability and hospitality which gladdened at extimacy.¹⁹

At the same time as somewhat still being susceptible to it, ironically it is Catholic 'strong farmers' and priests who are now doing more, more than any Anglo-Ascendancy, to dispel that sociability.

Critics in general have not been kind to the play, perhaps, I would suggest, when the play depends so much on the role of The Child, a role critics find difficult to identify with, or difficult to identify with with any depth, and thereby critics miss much of what Yeats's work identified with, in this play, and perhaps elsewhere. Jeffares labelled the play "a slight play" (Jeffares 1949: 95), and O'Donoghue dismissed the play as "uncertain allegory" and "folksy twilight". (O'Donoghue 2006: 108) Kurdi is more attentive to how

¹⁸ This concept was also explored in the last chapter, but in a different context, in May Laffan's *The Game Hen*.

¹⁹ See Evans (1996: 58-59).

the play is a "complex example" of a play including a child character, one "stressing its agency and power." (Kurdi 2002: 77) The Child does indeed enact "the experience that the material and the spiritual domains and values have moved fatally apart." (Kurdi 2007: 79) Should the voice not participate in a 'spiritualised', Catholic, father-occluded Imaginary, the signifier is fatal, and indeed the Child does resemble a *femme fatale* carrying off Mary Bruin - the play does not escape its own Imaginary, Irish conditions. Hence, in many ways, the sentiment of the play.

The charms and rhythms of all Yeats' poetry and verse dramas were meant to be so lovely as to "murmur again and again for years". (Yeats 1999: 324) *The Land of Heart's Desire* rests on murmurs a child could take pleasure in, such as the Child's haunting song of the lonely of heart withered away. Those simple, rhythmic pleasures have their own profundity, a profundity Yeats kept in mind thinking back on the play.

Deirdre and *On Baile's Strand*, unified after I had torn up many manuscripts, are more profound than the sentimental *Land of Heart's Desire*, than the tapestry-like *Countess Cathleen*, finished scene by scene, but that first manner might have found its own profundity. (Yeats 1999: 323)

The play of course is part sentiment - Mary's death at the end lands on a note of sentiment. However, the excitement of the play depends on murmurs in the audience's heart not meant for pathos over a dead child, but excitement over the beauty of the Child's voice, dance, and desire.²⁰ Yeats hoped and trusted such plays would most of all *be heard* by audiences, and those murmurs to kindle a nationalist politics.

Years later, Yeats still remembered the "beautiful speaking voice" of Florence Farr who played Mary Bruin in the original production of *The Land of Heart's Desire*. He also recalled a Dublin actress praised for "having brought tears into my eyes because she had them in her voice". (Yeats 1999: 307) The same critic (perhaps Yeats in disguise), went on of Farr, "but that young girl brought [tears] into my eyes with beauty". (Yeats 1999: 307) Raising a beautiful voice to exaltation was Yeats' greatest pleasure, even at the privations

²⁰ Michael Collins is the singular male figure in Irish political history who might just be compared with The Child. Collins' fondest goal in a bout of wrestling with friends and foe alike after subduing his opponent was 'a bit of ear' (a bite on the ear). Frank O'Connor is clear that "whenever we seek the source of action in [Collins] it is always in the world of his childhood that we find it", and Collins had a "strange romantic tenderness, that sense of the eternal wistfulness of things". (O'Connor 1979: 19, 39-40) In his Cork manner, Collins was perhaps a Yeatsian dreamer, a tempter and killer committed to a vision of Ireland with the utter self-possession of The Child - the "eternal boy", O'Connor calls him. (O'Connor 1979: 107)

of historical trauma and personal loss. Yeats in the Introduction to the 1937 collected edition of plays also recalled an Indian tale:

Certain men said to the greatest of the sages, "Who are your masters?" And he replied, "The wind and the harlot, the virgin and the child, the lion and the eagle." (Yeats 2001: 25)

Not only may the child be active and have a beautiful voice, but the child may be worthy for a master. Having the child or desire as master was the basis of Yeats's ethics, as opposed to Catholic and colonial ethics symbolising desire for the other in the voiceless child, or *infans*, so as one singular master may dominate many others. How Yeats claimed to know people or know anything at all was only through voices - his occultism would be another expression of this - and isn't that all that Yeats ever wanted for Ireland, a beautiful voice?

Mary Bruin, like Antigone, follows her desire even till death. Mary's ethical act parts body from life and leaves behind the body of an abandoned imagination precisely in order to save the imagination and desire itself.²¹ A dying from the murmur of desire in the heart is Yeats's ideal not merely of heroism, but of life, and following the extimacy of desire even till death is Yeats's concept of the beautiful, and it was the beauty of extimacy Yeats heard in the voice of Florence Farr.

Extimacy is simply another name for what in Irish literature is called 'queerness', a quality problematising any opposition between the private and public, and a quality relating how the Other is "something strange to me, although it is at the heart of me." (Lacan 1999a: 71) This ineradicable extimacy is the desire at the heart of the human child, what makes the human child incapable of ever being, or becoming, *tabula rasa*.

For he comes, the human child,
To the waters and the wild
With a fairy, hand in hand,
From a world more full of weeping than he can understand.
(*The Stolen Child*, 1886)

²¹ Marina Carr's trilogy in some ways thus resembles *The Land of Heart's Desire*.

Chapter 4 - Samuel Beckett

To take metaphysics out of a spoken language is to make the language express what it does not ordinarily express... to reveal its possibilities for revealing physical shock; to divide and distribute it actively in space; to deal with intonations in an absolutely concrete manner, restoring their power to shatter as well as to really manifest something; to turn against language and its basely utilitarian, one could say, alimentary, sources, against its trapped beast origins; and finally, to consider language as the form of *Incantation*. (Artaud 1958: 46)

In Beckett's *Trilogy*, the narrator's fundamental organ is the ear - "the head is there, glued to the ear", or "perhaps that's what I feel, myself vibrating, I'm the tympanum, on the one hand mind, on the other the world, I don't belong to either." (*T*, 359, 386) Though finally the narrator will not even "feel an ear", throughout the *Trilogy*'s enduring threat of a solitary overwhelming solipsism, the listening ear triumphs as the organ avowing mind over matter. The ear belongs to neither mind or matter, and is set against the vision and mind-as-lamp metaphor preferred by the Romantic tradition surveyed by Abrams's *The Mirror and the Lamp* (1953). (*T*, 386) Lady Gregory graciously said she had been

forced to write comedy because it was wanted for our theatre, to put on at the end of verse plays... the listeners, and this especially when they are lovers of verse, have to give so close an attention to the lines... that ear and mind crave ease and unbending. (Gregory 1970: v)

Beckett's opus accomplishes both demands with a form of colloquial verse prose worthy of close reading bumping up against the insurmountable obstacle of a split, impure self, bending over with laughter, bending back with loneliness. Beckett's texts listen for the bends.

The noise. How long did I remain a pure ear? Up to the moment when it could go on no longer, being too good to last... These millions of different sounds, always the same, recurring without pause, are all one needs to sprout a head.
(*T*, 357)

The inveigling Romantic allure of solipsism is discarded not by a sublime aesthetics of vision, but in an auditory sublime of 'millions of different sounds'. The heteronomy of the auditory, sprouting a head, is *then* tied to the production of an ego. The Romantic, normative, causal procedure of an ego perceiving and creating a world is reversed. The ego is only a necessity to sort out all the possible sounds of the world. Genesis is the contingent listening for a Word to arrive.

In *Malone Dies* (1956), Malone is at a table, immobile except for his hand writing with a pencil associated with Venus. Some new sound from the action of writing surprises him and "makes me say that something must have changed. Whence that child I might have been, why not?" (T, 208) There is never a pure creation - to imagine creating a pure world from a pure ear, making for some pure persona, is pure cod. Rather, a contingent listener listening to millions of sounds becomes the unnamable sprouting a head.

On the run from the law in Lady Gregory's *The Rising of the Moon* (1904), the disguised character of 'The Man' has an encounter at the quay with a sergeant out to arrest him. The Man seduces the sergeant, saying,

It's a queer world, sergeant, and it's little any mother knows when she sees her child creeping on the floor what might happen to it before it has gone through its life, or who will be who in the end. (Gregory 1970: 64)

The *Trilogy* is packed with such 'queer' unknowingness over who will be who, and not simply who will be who in the end, but from the outset - "I don't know how I got here. Perhaps in an ambulance." (T, 7) The *Trilogy* establishes all kinds of contingency in its ranks of narrative, such as shifting personas (now mere narrative effects), and personal names that neither proceed nor succeed for long.

Beckett's endearment for contingency was clear whenever Mercier complained Beckett had "made Didi and Gogo *sound* as if they had Ph.D.'s. 'How do you know they hadn't?' was Beckett's reply." (Mercier 1990: 46, italics mine) This apparent split between the appearance of Vladimir and Estragon and their diction and vocalisation had raised Mercier's naturalistic hackles - voice did not 'mirror' image. "Decidedly this eye is hard of hearing," the narrator complains in *The Unnamable* (1959). (T, 364) Beckett both pines and delights whenever looking and listening (or the two registers of Imaginary and Symbolic) become incompatible by a feminine *jouissance* *destroying* their conventional one-to-one (rational) or one-to-many (symbolic) correspondences in the text.

This 'destroying' of Imaginary-Symbolic expectations is a recasting of the 'destroying' which takes place in *The Playboy of the Western World* (1907). Beckett does not destroy by acting out an Oedipalised libido designed to annihilate and trade places with the subject in the position of the father (a dirty deed). Assuming a name-of-the-father does not provide Beckett with joy. The joy of destroying is re-imagining stereotypical Symbolic-Imaginary couplings and tearing that coupling away from Oedipalised conflicts over accession to a

name-of-the-father. As Deane puts it, "A stereotype should not perhaps be demolished until it has been reinhabited." (Deane 1993: 55) Beckett desires to re-inhabit the stereotypical Symbolic-Imaginary pseudo-couplings of the English language, particularly in how such stereotyped couplings constrained the imagination of the Irish speaking and writing in English. This is at the heart of both Beckett's sense of comedy and his under-rated contribution to an English language which might even be post-colonial, not simply in name, but in usage.

The problem is delicate... The affair is thorny. Is not a uniform suffering preferable to one which, by its ups and downs, is liable at certain moments to encourage the view that perhaps after all it is not eternal? That must depend on the object pursued. Namely? (*T*, 370)

The object pursued will not be a name - Beckett's pursuit of success and failure are not pitched at garnering a name-of-the-father, either in English or Irish (names-of-the-father would get nearer). Self-exile and writing *The Unnamable* in French comprised a counter-manoeuve to the traps of both English and Irish nationalism. Consider our introduction to Worm,

But it's time I gave this solitary a name, nothing doing without proper names. I therefore baptise him Worm. It was high time. Worm. I don't like it, but I haven't much choice. It will be my name too, when the time comes. (*T*, 340)

What nationality is Worm? Worm's naming is a brilliant and funny post-colonial manoeuvre - does a worm beneath Surrey appreciate it is burrowing in holy, English soil, or is a worm beneath Mullingar all the happier for burrowing in holy, Irish soil? - the name of Worm upends the Symbolic-Imaginary pseudo-coupling between a nation and a patriot. Worm reinhabits the stereotype of the patriot.

De Grazia traces a special connection between the human and *humus* in *Hamlet*. The connection is played by a molar metaphor running throughout *Hamlet*, especially the "old mole" epithet (1.5.164), where Hamlet "notoriously talks down to his father as if his father once beneath him spatially were his social inferior." (De Grazia 2007: 42) Hamlet desires to 'talk down' to his father, to overthrow and encompass him, but he also desires death to meet his father by the Law of the Father, in the flesh of the dead father. Hamlet associates action with the thought of his own, dead, "too, too solid flesh" (1.1.129), and his 'impossible' solution is procrastination, burrowing his way more slowly towards death, a *lâ* Joyce in the *Wake*, sublimating a fearful ambivalence by rooting in language.

A number of mocking, Hamlet moments appear throughout the *Trilogy*, such as.

My cigar had gone out unnoticed... to discover the cold cigar between my teeth, to spit it out, to search for it in the dark, to pick it up, to wonder what I should do with it, to shake it needlessly and put it in my pocket, to conjure up the ash-tray and the waste-paper basket, these were merely the principal stages of a sequence which I spun out for a quarter of an hour at least... Finding my spirits as low in the garden as in the house..." (T, 123)

This is an image of the anxiety of influence - the cigar is also old Hamlet, whose dead flesh burns in Hamlet's voice - and Beckett's scornful pastiche of what counts for conjuring the dark in Hamlet's fretful monologues. Beckett hardly would doom some young doom like Romantic Hamlet, but he would lampoon him, with cigars.¹

Beckett's best comedy of masculine molarity is Willie in *Happy Days* (1961), constantly crawling into his hole and even getting that wrong. "Go on now, Willie. [WILLIE invisible starts crawling left towards hole.] That's the man." (Beckett 1990: 147) Willie's hole might be a fox-hole, as if Winnie with her gun is a *femme fatale* who must be guarded by him, in the role of the father guarding the voice of the *femme fatale*. Winnie's voice is chained to her flesh chained to Mother Earth, yet her voice and the signifier still escapes the flesh:

Oh well what does it matter, that is what I always say, it will come back, that is what I find so wonderful, all comes back. [Pause.] All? [Pause.] No, *not all*... A part. [Pause.] Floats up, one fine day, out of the blue. [Pause.] That is what I find so wonderful. (Beckett 1990: 144, italics mine)

Winnie is not geared towards truth as representational - what does it matter?² Her 'not all' is the unknowable gap of signification she still can sense and literally act out of her self, with a sigh of wonder. This floating off is a momentary drama of blue feminine *jouissance*, splitting the Imaginary and Symbolic, the flesh and the signifier, opening up the Real like an opening in the sky.

¹ "Literature and history and folklore have considerable advertising value - cigars and cigarettes are named usually after public men, as *Blackstone* cigars, *Prince Albert* tobacco, *Chesterfield* cigarettes, *William Penn* cigars, *Henry George* cigars, *Webster* cigars." (Johnson 1928: 92). Johnson also mentions Prince Hamlet Cigars, in the US market, and the date of his, 1928, means Beckett in 1934 could have had such a material prompt for this section in *Molloy*. The introduction of 'Hamlet' cigars in the UK took place in 1964, The advertisement campaign with Gregor Fisher in the guise of a "Baldy Man" character, attempting to use a photo booth (and so find his image), was a brilliant debunking of the Romantic Hamlet myth. "Happiness is a cigar called Hamlet" was the perfect by-line for the campaign. On that note, the child killed in *All That Fall* (1957) is killed under the wheels of a smoking train.

² The final question asked by Molly Sweeney in Friel's *Molly Sweeney* (1994).

In *Happy Days*, unlike in *Hamlet*, there will be no excruciating roster of death to countenance, or conscience and murder to agonise over. The crucial point is how Beckett's molar men are not murderously desperate to avail themselves of a high-named position of the father. At the end of Willie's occupation of the father position he simply whispers Winnie's name as his legacy.

A worm is a soft fleshed, spineless, small segmented creature, and therefore to be associated with the feminine. Also, worm as a persona connotes some cowardly aversion in the face of action (like Hamlet). Beckett may be pitying and lampooning a worm's 'phallic' masculinity - but worm is still progress towards the unnamable - worms aerate the land, and like a penis, make life possible for *other* life.³

Both Worm and Malone are tragi-comic subjects of segmented life, only Malone is devoted to sublimating his segmentation in a more material fashion. His language is percolated with accounting terms - "I credit it... my old debtor... I am repaid" - right from the first paragraph. (T, 179, 180, 180) Malone has a crude willingness to compartmentalise or segment life, saving up an inventory of compartments, a taking stock of life in a personal life history. "But can I really resign myself to the possibility of my dying without leaving an inventory behind?" (T, 182) All this is done in the hope of an unspecifiable reward in the after life. Malone's inventory will become a gift to the Other in preparation of meeting death, death the unnamable which comes after, and *The Unnamable* literally follows the death of Malone in *Malone Dies*. Life for Malone is segmentally (and proleptically) attached to death, which is the truth of the Law of the Father with a dead father at its head. Unfortunately, Malone only comes to life by counting his possessions in anticipation of death (counting is a metaphor for 'good' to a utilitarian name-of-the-father), and *Malone Dies* partly is a wild satire on the Christian pieties of autobiography.

With Beckett, life's twists are not counted and written down in an inventory of goods and sins, or sublimated through segmented names adding up to a name-of-the-father, but segments of sound in the ear. In *Texts for Nothing*, a narrator asks,

³ Worms are classed in the phylum *Annelida*, from Latin, *anellus*, or "little ring". Depending upon the species, annelids can reproduce both sexually and asexually. Some annelida species are hermaphroditic, while others have distinct sexes. All of these matters are approached in the *Trilogy*. 'Worm' also might even ironically recall Beckett's stinging criticism of the Revival poets in *Recent Irish Poetry* (1934), with their "segment after segment of cut-and-dried sanctity and loveliness." (Beckett 2001: 71) The designation Worm is not simple. Perhaps the Revival poets were soft-skinned worms, burrowing in the land of heart's desire? Burrowing into the land could be a nationalist trope, as well as in *Hamlet*, if a more personal trope, for the powerless

what is it, this unnamable thing that I name and name and never wear out, and I call that words... with what words shall I name my unnamable words?"

(Beckett 1995: 125)

Beckett continually diverts interest away from the exhausted object of names, a diversion demanding a metonymic sliding of the signifier away from the Oedipal, metaphoric foundations of conventional assortments of words, arranged by order of nouns and names (symbols, themes, motifs). This is a writer who suffered and enjoyed being sundered from most associations of meaning spanning signification in English literature and criticism. Nothing might take place before death, nothing might take place before the end of the text, - the signifier shall be encountered in life and in the living. The later prose texts especially are an incantation of signifiers strung out endlessly and barely punctuated. Signifiers are so naked in their bare grammar their materiality leaps out. In *The Unnamable* and *Nohow On*, there is the patter of commas, strings of questions, disjunctive statements, and a relative absence of grammar.

A voice to enunciate these words must produce an imagination not already written by a previous, more conventional grammar. Hence how the paternal metaphor within reading is upset - the grammar of the father (cohered around master signifiers and names securing continuous time and personas), is being undermined. The text now bears a function close to the analyst, the subject *supposed* to know, whose passion for ignorance is the only possible guide to new meaning. Molloy talks of how, "only when I made a superhuman effort... I regained my ignorance." (*T*, 82) There is a tremendous complexity at stake. A change of discourse, discourse as "a social link, founded on language", is always associated with a change of grammar. (Lacan 1999c: 17) Beckett does want a change of discourse - especially from colonial discourse - he works hard against the status of the name-of-the-father exalted in a blunt Oedipus complex 'seeing' and garnering desire around proleptically attaining the position of the father in an Imaginary, continuous, conventional narrative.

In *The Unnamable* and *Nohow On*, readers and speakers must listen for their breath, and how they breath, and find their own breath and place in the text. In the last of *Texts for Nothing*, the narrator falls prostrate to the breath of the voice:

dispossessed of the title to their land. A worm's segments might be compared with the 'fragment' of Romanticism, see Cohn (1964).

Yes here is empty, not a speck of dust, not a breath, the voice's breath alone, it breathes in vain, nothing is made. If I were here, if it could have made me, how I would pity it, for having spoken so long in vain. (Beckett 1995: 153)

The primordial position of the father is ultimately a non-speaking part, and being a non-speaking part, there is no need for breathing to be co-ordinated with the signifier. Beckett's lack of punctuation and his irregular grammar constructs are designed to interrupt the assumption of the speaker to the position of the father (the 'good' or 'correct' reader). Beckett 'destroying' a father-occluded grammar leads speaker and reader to other structures possible in our father-grammar-occulted minds, but none can be specified in advance - they are dark because unknowable in advance.

Victor Sage comments how, "Implied in Beckett's prose style and his whole manner of writing is a diatribe against certain expectations of language: notably the organic." (Sage 1975: 93) This is correct of language, but Beckett is still interested in the organic of the body and the body's voicing. *Breath* (1970), for instance, is a play of lungs and telephonic lips. The acts of breathing, reading, and acting within these texts demand the work of the imagination, and this cannot be an imagination accrued solely around the position of the father and that grammar of conventionality, especially as it applies to the all-consuming importance of names and pronouns and their central position in conventional discourse. Beckett is removing the flesh (Sage's organic, or Imaginary) over the signifier and setting out to follow upon the metonymy of the Law of Desire, re-modelling narration to work against the 'stability' of a paternal metaphor gratified by a secure narrator.

When Beckett does use a controlling metaphor, a favourite is the game of chess. Chess is a game arranged in hierarchical fashion, where hierarchy determines mobility. The queen is a more powerful piece by being more mobile than the king, though the king has a more powerful name and position. Yet a pawn (the worm of a chess board), might develop into a game-winning piece, quietly sliding around. Beckett takes chess as a metaphor for developing a possibility and a reality projecting metonymy (or sliding) as a powerful representation of our condition as language users, including and especially around identity. The pieces might all be more like pawns and worms (or a termite in *Watt*), than first thought, and then, pawns and worms might become a little more endearing.

Historically, our literary tradition has privileged metaphor over metonymy as the trope of choice for 'serious' literature. Indeed, Jakobson himself, once having made the choice between the distinction between the metaphoric and metonymic poles, has conspicuously little to say about the latter mode of writing: 'when constructing a metalanguage to interpret tropes, the researcher

possesses more homogeneous means to handle metaphor, whereas metonymy, based on a different principle, easily defies interpretation. (Dettmar 1990: 83)

Beckett's metonymy might be confusing, but as Deane puts it, "Beckett's writing is calculated to arouse indecision in the reader." (Deane 1984: 59) Deane analyses how in *Molloy*, the reader is left in ambiguity over the identity of 'it', whether 'it' refers to a Pomeranian dog or a gentleman. (Deane 1984: 59) The same might be true of the pawn or the king, the worm or the man - as the sergeant in *The Rising of the Moon* puts it, "who will be who, in the end". Not only is who will be who in the end problematised, but who will be what, animal (worm) or human (man). Or else, "the only way one can speak of man, even our anthropologists have realised that, is to speak of him as though he were a termite." (Beckett 1998: 74) Beckett uses metonymy and metonymy is open and resistant to interpretation, a source of long confused emotions and the Beckettian grey whereby any persona might have any name, or even, what is worse, where any emotion might have any name. However, things are not all bad with metonymy.

Beckett's use of metonymy may contain jokes, as in *Come and Go* (1966). The item the three women sit on, a "bench-like seat", has nearly all Beckett's name in the spelling in the right order: BEnChliKE seat. (Beckett 1990: 356) Beckett's name is 'almost', or not-All, the structure the female figures sit, rest, and gossip upon, and his name is metonymically sliding beneath the backside of the three women. The body is a structure of signification, and

structure... is of the same text as *jouissance*, insofar as, in marking by what distance *jouissance* misses... structure does not presuppose merely the *jouissance* that would be it, it also props up another. (Lacan 1999b: 111-112)

Beckett is realising a joke on this order of signification. There is a profusion of 'not' in the text of *Come and Go* - out of one hundred and twenty one words, 'not' occurs seven times. The final line is, "I can feel the rings". (Beckett 1990: 355) Metonymically tying 'nots' and rings together, a tree becomes possible, even perhaps the tree from whose timber the bench-like seat was made. Have not these three women grown old together like a tree, and each time one of them goes to the edge of the stage, could that not be the growing of a branch? Could *Come and Go* be Beckett's own drawing of the tree of life, made of nots and rings?

In a theatre the 'inner' voices of an audience are kept politely quiet and still, and *That Time* (1976) may be considered a meta-theatrical joke on the arrangement. The Listener's voice

is segmented into A, B, C - that much is clear, if the narrative of each speaker is confusing. Since the seats of a theatre are labelled in rows sliding over the letters A, B, C..., the listener's voice arrangement is actually a pun on theatrical convention, and vice versa. There is as much communication between the people in the audience as between the voices A, B, C, of the god-like Listener - *That Time* is not mainly about the latent narrative content of each voice, but how the structure and separation of those voices resembles a theatre audience. It is Beckett's witty joke on the 'toothless', ventriloquised voice of masculinity and its preference for the gaze, right up to the agency of the letter.⁴ *That Time* could also be considered a theatrical, equally metonymical version of the *Trilogy* and of masculine segmentation, but now, literally, an audience can "see the ventriloquist". (*T*, 351) The ventriloquist was only a toothless old man with white hair who didn't like speaking in public, a *petit* primordial father's grandiloquent silence.

Beckett's metonymic leap going from sound to the child - a new sound "makes me say that something must have changed. Whence that child I might have been, why not?" (*T*, 208) - is rather startling and touching. There is possible sentiment for the child and indeed for the father.

Hand in hand with equal plod they go. In the free hands - no. Free empty hands. Backs turned both bowed with equal plod they go. The child hand raised to reach the holding hand. Hold the old holding hand. Hold and be held. Plod on and never recede... joined by held holding hands. Plod on as one. One shade. Another shade. (*Worstward Ho*; Beckett: 1996: 93)

Knowlson writes:

Yet, however dimly perceived or imagined, a startling image is created that Beckett admitted to me was one of the most 'obsessional' (his word) of his childhood memories: that of an old man walking hand in hand with a child. (Knowlson 1997: 676)

Sentiment cannot be discounted, why should it, but sentiment is definitely being redrawn, made strange, and more shaded. Surely this is so because flesh is pitiful, named or not, and perhaps even *especially pitiful*, whenever flesh is unnamed (the fate of the poor, and many Famine victims). Flesh *is* pitiful in the vulnerability of children and old people. A softness comes in a taking of hands, one of few communions in Beckett, and all the more welcome and moving.

⁴ Once again, male bodies must leave Ireland (the condition of the exile), or voices must leave male bodies (the condition of the stereotype).

However, the conventional family structure is not by necessity any source of sentiment. There are various strong and sundry outbursts against all three of father, mother and child:

A small boy, stretching out his hands and looking up at the blue sky, asked his mother how such a thing was possible. Fuck off, she said. (Beckett 1995: 81)

One day I caught sight of my son... He took off his hat and bowed... The insufferable son of a bitch. (Beckett 1995: 87)

Ah my father and mother, to think they are probably in paradise, they were so good. Let me go to hell, that's all I ask, and go on cursing them there, and them look down and hear me, that might take some of the shine off their bliss. (Beckett 1995: 159)

My father, did I kill him too as well as my mother, perhaps in a way I did.... (Beckett 1995: 159)

What I am arguing for is that in Beckett connections between the positions of father and child (including mother and child), become much more heterogeneous, or equally, there is greater mobility between them than went before.⁵ The manner of sentimental and patriarchal narration attaching the position of the father to the position-as-child and spurning the signifier as death (symbolised by the *femme fatale*), is intolerable.

The connection between the position of the father and the position-as-child (the Hamlet position) has its perfect, comic and pathetic magnification in *Endgame* (1958). There is the delicious satire of Hamlet by Hamm, "Can there be misery - [*he yawns*] - loftier than mine?" (Beckett 1990: 93) Hamm can expect to remain in the position of the father as long as he can maintain Clov in the position-as-child.

Clov can only see himself as the less powerful in the roles of master / servant, father / son, teacher / pupil that have been supplied to him by Hamm. Because that 'education' does not include the ideological source for his domination, Clov cannot understand why he acts out his subservience: 'There's one thing I'll never understand... Why I always obey you. Can you explain that to me?' (Lyons 1991: 201)

⁵ In *All That Fall* (1957), the connection between the 'Female Voice' and her charge, Dolly, is highly suggestive of evil. Dolly puns on dolly, and the Female Voice has a "cackling laugh", implying the child, Dolly, is a fetish object for a witch-Female Voice. Consider her commands to Dolly, "Oh, look, Dolly, look!... Mind yourself, Dolly!" - the Female Voice is a child-minding, self-obsessed, self-possessed and Dolly-possessed witch - with an evil eye. (Beckett 1990: 185) The Female Voice is like a warlock guarding a little Anti-Christ. Further evidence is how her warnings, "Give me your hand and hold me tight, one can be sucked under", come true for another child who then suffers this fate, or 'spell'. (Beckett 1990: 184-185) Maddy's voice calls up sounds of animals, but the Female Voice calls up death for infants other than her own. This is an intensification of the discussion of the infant in Chapter 2, with Laffan's *The Game Hen*.

Clov always obeys (like Lucky) because of being trapped in the (Imaginary) Trap of Hamm's (or Pozzo's) dispensation in the position of the father. Therefore Clov *cannot say* why he obeys (Clov's aphasia, a mark of trauma). "I ask the words that remain - sleeping, waking, morning, evening. They have nothing to say." (Beckett 1990: 132) Clov's name connotes how Clov can 'see'-love (more metonymy), but may never speak love, trapped in a gaze annihilating all differences incommensurate with desire for the Imaginary position of the father. Clov's cleavage to life is survival, survival *exclusively* inside the purvey of the father's gaze.

In the society between Hamm and Clov, only the father can put flesh on the signifier. Hamm holds the key to the larder and hence puts food on the table since the father position's exclusive right of "putting food on the table" is synonymous with putting flesh on the signifier. However, Clov does manage some resistance and the manner of Clov's departure is very striking - Clov leaves dressed in a Panama hat, tweed coat, and raincoat, much like a detective in film *noir*. (Beckett 1990: 132) Clov is looking for a 'dark' of his own, trying to be a *noir* detective who then needs to find a *femme fatale* and escape being bound to the position of the father.

The collapse of the distance between the positions of father and child is satirised and undermined in *Texts for Nothing 1*;

it ended happily, it began unhappily and it ended happily, every evening, a comedy, for children. Yes, I was my father and I was my son, I asked myself questions and answered as best as I could. (Beckett 1995: 103)

Beckett chooses to problematise and satirise naming as the tied fate of the flesh and the signifier (the Law of the Father) by radically turning over and over the raddling contingency of the signifier, figured either as the unnameable content of 'nothing' and 'it', or in the discursive 'shocks' of sliding personas - the Law of the Father is either satirised or transgressed.

In *Watt* (1953), "Some see the flesh before the bones, and some see the bones before the flesh... and some never see the flesh at all, never never see the flesh at all". (Beckett 1998: 70) Beckett 'sees' not only the skull beneath the flesh, but a voice and signifiers beneath the skull. Ultimately, the signifier is the skeletal structure and remains of Beckett's subject. Time itself reveals and proceeds in the same manner, "... death throes, rigor and rigor mortis, emerald of the bony structure, that should suffice. Unfortunately, it's a question of

words, of voices, one must not forget that". (T, 388) Yet though the narrator in *The Unnamable* "can't think anything, can't judge of anything, but the kind of flesh he has is good enough... How physical this all is!" (T, 360) Then also in *Watt*, Watt "had turned, little by little, a disturbance into words, he had made a pillow of old words, for a head." (Beckett 1998: 115) There is a comic, pillow comfort in turning a disturbance of flesh into words - the Law of Desire, with 'Beckett' as his comically own, *noir* narrative - sounds make egos and words, and they in turn make flesh and pillows, allowing some respite and rest from the sounds. *Worstward Ho* (1983) puts the thesis ironically backwards, in the opening line itself: "First the body. No. First the place. No. First both. Now either. Now the other. Sick of either try the other." (Beckett 1996: 90) All contingency arises from the signifier and voice, through the Other. Like other Irish writers such as Stoker and Yeats, Beckett is in part a high Gothic theorist, obsessed with voices and the signifier beneath the flesh and beneath the bones. The signifier is both torment and pillow.

In the period the Law of the Father was being consolidated in the late eighteenth century, discussions of voice and translation accompanied the new explosion of print culture. The issue of the 'voice' had become a huge legal question at the heart of the emerging print culture with writers demanding protection from plagiarism. Samuel Taylor Coleridge's notion of "untranslatableness" in the *Biographia Literaria* took its context from legal debates ascertaining copyright provision, and what constituted an author's distinct, unique identity, or literary property. The answer, a Romantic legacy, was 'voice', where voice functioned as a metaphor for an author's "'essence' or 'quiddity' in print culture", especially for the sound-patternings of verse. (Russett 2003: 773) Verse forms were the material upon which copyright provision was grounded, and Lady Gregory's admonishment how "listeners, and this especially when they are lovers of verse, have to give so close an attention to the lines", follows in this English cultural and legal tradition.

Copyright law distinguished between "the material 'body' and the immaterial 'spirit' of a literary work", and constituted an early legal framework for 'the materiality of the signifier.'" (Russett 2003: 773)⁶ It also insinuated that every author must have a unique

⁶ Russett writes, "The canonical statement on literary identity may be found in Justice Blackstone's opinion for the pivotal 1774 case *Donaldson v. Beckett*. "The Identity of a literary Composition," Blackstone declared,

consists entirely in the *Sentiment* and the *Language*; the same Conceptions, cloathed in the same Words, must necessarily be the same Composition; and whatever Method be taken of conveying that Composition, to the Ear, or to the Eye, of another, by Recital, by Writing, or by Printing, in any Number of Copies, at any Period of Time; it is always the identical Work of the Author." (Russett 2003: 777)

voice, and the stronger the voice, the greater and more protected the author. What copyright law instituted in the legal framework, Romantic metaphors constructing language as scopic and the voice as 'essence' supplemented in the cultural aesthetic.

In Beckett, there is a narrative dispersion of copyright law and its validation and assignation of one voice to one flesh. "Beckett destroys the architectural framework found in traditional narrative." (Trieloff 1990: 98) With Beckett, every voice can possess a difficult to distinguish persona - "the voice must belong to someone, I've no objection, what it wants I want". (*T*, 412) Using a legal idiom, "I've no objection," Beckett forfeits the ego's pretence at embodying a legal voluntarism.

By the Law of the Father, only one name or seat of consciousness is attached to one flesh and one authorial 'voice', and this voice is not offered the excuse of ignorance or a lack of intention (except on pain of madness). However, Beckett has a passion for both voices and ignorance, and Beckett, like Molloy, is prepared to make a superhuman effort to regain his ignorance. (*T*, 82) The concept of Oedipalised, intentional being is lampooned in the *Trilogy* in a narrative playing ontological, musical chairs with toilet seats on the chairs. The narrator reasons,

if I am Mahood, I am Worm too, plop. Or if I am not yet Worm, I shall be
when I cease to be Mahood, plop. (T, 340)

The playful language seems to belong to a child - but this 'childish' position is enunciated by a shifting persona and a supposedly 'adult' discursive shock. Once more, as when Malone was writing, there is a change of sound, this time plop, and not only a new being or child begins, but worse, a new and intelligent adult begins to take over the narration.⁷

The uncertain relationship between "sentiments" and "language" was noted and questioned by Lord Camden, who in his dissenting opinion on the same case asked whether this identity lay "in the Sentiments, the Language, and Style, or the Paper? If in the Sentiments, or Language, no one can translate or abridge them." (Russett 2003: 777-778) Swift's satirical lambasting of the Aeolists in *A Tale of a Tub* (1704), ridiculed the claimed material transparency of the signifier in the notion of voice (and its insinuation of the scopic metaphor for language). A scopic metaphor for language had a material basis in a capitalist, print economy needing to own voices for profit.

⁷ Martin McDonagh's plays are littered with references to 'scitter' (shit, and especially diarrhoea), which also means 'child'. In *The Beauty Queen of Leenane* (1996), references are (McDonagh 1999: 9, 16, 58); *A Skull in Connemara* (1997) - (McDonagh 1999: 66, 68, 70, 77, 98, 103, 115, 124, 125); and *The Lonesome West* (1997) - (McDonagh 1999: 175). McDonagh is literally playing with and making fun of the position of the father and his scittery support, the position-as-child. McDonagh has little metaphorical reverence for the position of the father in his own skull (unlike Hamlet in the graveyard scene in *Hamlet*).

Colonialism and patriarchy prefer not to pay attention to plopping. If plop is sometimes comic, it is also a shameful and dirty thing. The father plops the position-as-child as a shameful, dirty version of the father, and keeps it close - the position of the child is the "trapped beast" in the alimentary canal of the father, whose toilet activities are done in silent privacy as much as possible. (Artaud 1958: 46) The production of the child is a canard of the position of the father whose ideal of a stable, unified, intentional self is constipated, given to absorption but then blockage and anal retentiveness, or with basically a want to take and a refusal to give. The patriarchal father is convivial enough to give the child life, but the same father is venal enough to block the child's life, or its own desires.

Acts of colonisation include acts of venality as well as conviviality, venality when "the colonised individual feels attracted to the coloniser's excrements, and conviviality, "because there is hardly any form of domination as intimate as colonial domination." (Mbembé 2001: 237) The narrator in *The End* says, "The excrements were me too, I know, I know, *but all the same*." (Beckett 1995: 98, italics mine) Leo Bersani in *Homos* (1995), writes with approval of Beckett's "cultural droppings", (Bersani 1995: 181), and critically pays attention to the political value of excess waste:

In a society where oppression is structural, constitutive of sociality itself, only what that society throws off - its mistakes or its pariahs - can serve the future.
(Bersani 1995: 180)

The question of plop is the question of who distributes, names and controls the plops of language, its non-usable excesses or *jouissance*. The colonised feels attracted to the coloniser's excrement exactly to surmise such *jouissance*, but in *The Unnamable*, Beckett is turning this toilet habit the other way around.

Jouissance is *not all the same* between the coloniser and the colonised, and that kernel of difference does mean violence is necessary to force the native to accept the *jouissance* (or gaps in signification) of the colonial culture. However, mediation is possible, and even seductive, and both coloniser and colonised have sometimes learned to share *jouissance* and its inviting extimacy - extimacy has an assimilative potential able to convert or

hybridise a colonial master into a neighbour, or a native defender into a transformed neighbour.⁸

Beckett as a colonised *and* post-colonial artist interrogates the worming and naming processes of language in the aftermath of a period of history when violently enforced colonial 'sameness' sought to realign naming, worming *and plopping*. While plopping *sounds* childish, it is astute enough. Critchley highlights how,

If one is to be capable of listening to the voices that speak from the pages of the *Trilogy*, then it is at the very least necessary to suspend the hypothesis identifying the narrative voice of Beckett's work with the smiling third party of a controlling pure consciousness and ascribing the latter to Samuel Beckett.
(Critchley 1998: 126)

The *Trilogy* takes the capability of any reader to construct or decipher a narrative by inferring a unified consciousness, and *plops* contingency on the anal retentiveness of a pure rubric of consciousness. Beckett shares with Yeats a feeling for queerness, or extimacy, if for Beckett, 'nothing' is the most ecstatic extimacy of all.⁹

Further, Critchley's 'smiling third party' cannot be a colonial and Romantic critical tradition watching over Beckett's shoulder, as Beckett inappropriately lays waste to the masterful voice and signifier of colonial preference. Making a mess of things or making a plop and mongrelising meaning is the gold standard of Beckett's humorous treatment of voice and the translation of voice into persona. Lloyd writes how of Beckett "reappropriates certain modernist procedures from the marginal site of a post-colonial nation", and I agree, but the modernist procedure par excellence was *agonised attention to certainty itself*, especially as certainty was felt as being lost. (Lloyd 1993: 56) The question of voice and the translation of voices is crucial to ethics and Beckett's strident break with narrative copyright law and a colonial ethics of naming and mastery, translating every discourse with certainty into its

⁸ For instance, Norman settlers assimilated into Irish society and became the 'Old English', as were most settlers up to the Plantation policy beginning in the reign of Mary Tudor (1553-1558). The 'Munster plantation' from 1583 on failed primarily because of a lack of colonists, who were then assimilated despite the aggressive, apartheid provisions of plantation policy. The poet Edmund Spenser, himself part of the Munster plantation, wrote with some disgust in *A View of the Present State of Ireland* how that "instead of keeping out the Irish, they [the colonists] do not only make the Irish their tenants in those lands and thrust out the English, but also some of them become mere Irish." (cited Ellis 1996: 38)

⁹ Extimacy is a dire threat to the Law of the Father, which instead has an obsessive relationship to intimacy.

own voice and its own language, is fulsome.¹⁰ *The Unnamable* is a direct hit on this tradition disdaining an ethics of certainty.

"Beckett's own oeuvre, as inaugurated by *First Love / Premier Amour*, stands as the most exhaustive dismantling we have of the logic of identity that at every level structures and maintains the post-colonial moment." (Lloyd 1993: 56)

The unnamable is a 'thing' colonialism most always despised and required to treat as waste; every native concept not fitting into colonial language and culture, or the unnamable, must become dead waste, and that *jouissance* violently annihilated (particularly native laws, such as Brehon Law), or covered over, by its categorisation and absorption in, and refreshing of, a controlling colonial culture (Said's thesis in *Culture and Imperialism*). Then, the unnamable guilt of a native culture's deflected desire becomes the melancholy inheritance passed down in history to the colonised and post-colonial subject, but if the post-colonial subject is often a melancholy mongrel sniffling at the *jouissance* of the coloniser's language and culture, Beckett generated a distinctive pile of his own in the language of the coloniser.

In *Proust*, Beckett had considered how,

We are not merely more weary because of yesterday, we are other... The aspirations of yesterday were valid for yesterday's ego, not for today's.
(Beckett 1999: 13)

There is a serial logic of personas using a metaphor of liquidity.

The individual is the seat of a constant process of decantation, decantation from the vessel containing the fluid of future time, sluggish, pale and monochrome, to the vessel containing the fluid of past time, agitated and multicoloured by the phenomena of its hours. (Beckett 1999: 15)

¹⁰ Care needs taken - it would be ridiculous to attach an anti-copyright trait to Beckett and his work when Beckett is well known for fiercely protecting his literary estate. What is crucial is how the legal framework of copyright has driven a narrative aesthetic from the Romantic tradition onwards. Beckett certainly insists on the right of an author to the legal framework of copyright, but his work effectively denounces that legal framework as the basis of narrative technique, and particularly that legal framework as a mimetic basis for human thought and speech. The legal subject is not equivalent to the narrative or human subject (another expression of how the Law of the Father should not be the Law of Desire, the 'truth' of a father-occluded Imaginary). The position-as-child is the Romantic, 'right copy' of the position of the father, as it proleptically anticipates that position. Modernism was a troubling loss of copyright, especially in the encounter with native culture, in work by artists such as Picasso.

In *Proust*, Beckett was still crucially interested in counting time, a principle metaphor for the name-of-the-father. Increasingly so, Beckett's art became *ardently attached* to an art of impotence by which the voice is written out not as a possibility or a necessity (the necessity of an identity and the ideal ego coercing its desire), but as an ever present, indestructible contingency.¹¹ The subject's

place can be occupied by a master signifier (S1), by knowledge itself (S2), by lack (\$), or by a pleasure of suffering where a person is identified with the real impossibilities of an impasse. (Ragland 1995: 146)

Beckett's framing of difference and concept of the subject will change radically, towards Ragland's latter subject, or from a day to day decanting of liquid (a hydraulic and basically Romantic metaphor), to incanting an impasse, an impasse which, in a phrase repeated incessantly in the *Trilogy*, from 'time to time' is alleviated. From time to time, the noise "stops for a good few moments, a good few moments, what are a good few moments". (*T*, 412) There are no known or *no namable* reasons for this. Peter Gidal and Angela Moorjani agree how,

Beckett's theatrical practice positions spectators in conflict with the ideological effects of language, gesture and gaze. This positioning is largely effected by blocking stable identification with the known, whether conscious or unconscious. (Moorjani 2004: 182)

Beckett's theory of the subject moves away from a Romantic and copyright-colonial cultural framing to a post-colonial rationality with a passion for ignorance, which *sounds* impotent since it refuses and disassembles the claimed power of the coloniser to name all objects in a colonising gaze (Romanticism reified the same gaze). In other words, Beckett created extimacy with metonymy in the language of the coloniser.

Beckett's mournful, erotic and comic attachment to the signifier proceeds without elevating someone, somewhere, somehow, to an express and delimited position of the father. This impasse without a solution, though which from time to time is broken through for no apparent reason, has been (mis)read, nominated and relegated to the 'Absurd'. Without there being a secure position of the father to discover in the text, many critics experience a

¹¹ Lloyd interestingly connects *First Love* and hence love with dismantling the post-colonial moment. Dismantling love itself may be part of the post-colonial colonial moment, such as how love functions to duplicate a colonial encounter - discussed in the next chapter for Edna O'Brien. Lovelessness might well be the initial condition of post-colonialism, and I discuss this as well for Friel in Chapter 6.

troubling lack, that is, a lack of an exceptional individual (and a name), to psychologically and linguistically account for the troubles of a text leading nowhere, doing nothing, blaming no-one for anything - "we're innocent, he's innocent, it's nobody's fault, this state of affairs, what state of affairs". (T, 389) Beckett's texts are 'out of joint' with the position of the colonial, critical father.

Yet Beckett *knows* there is a pleasure to suffering the impasse of nothing and how only the signifier connects the position of the father and child - the signifier carries the eternal promise of a meeting with a reality beneath the flesh of ontological reality. "Nothing is more real than nothing" is a finessed take on this impasse. (T, 193) The kernel of the matter of nothing lies with the signifier.

Every real signifier is, as such, a signifier that signifies nothing. The more the signifier signifies nothing, the more indestructible it is. (Lacan 1993: 185)

However, in nothing's kingdom of contingency there is a vanishing chance of reigning - no wonder capitalist and colonial abhorrence for its freedoms, the Other can neither be copyrighted or colonised - and even a mystical attachment to the signifier must end with bittersweet capitulation to its implacable emptiness, even with the inexhaustible resources of the signifier. Yet it is only through nothing and the signifier's mobility by which the Other might be encountered (and that has ethical as well as an aesthetic considerations).

For instance, take Nell's quip, "Nothing is funnier than unhappiness, I grant you that." (Beckett 1990: 101) As well as saying unhappiness is supremely funny, Nell's statement may be reversed into saying, compared to unhappiness, nothing is funnier. With a different stress on 'is', two contrary assertions emerge from the statement turning the philosophical hulks of 'nothing' and 'unhappiness' into a pair (even a pseudo-couple) of concepts competing for comic supremacy. Beckett is a philosophical pookah wreaking havoc on the philosophical estates of death and decay, nothing and unhappiness. Beckett's "unique achievement is the creation of a philosophical genre, the epistemological comedy, which still evokes the emotional response we demand of art." (Cohn 1959: 15) In the dire, epistemological comedy contested between nothing and unhappiness, Beckett mounts a renaissance of anxiety, but anxiety not cocked into a hat of *sturm und drang* (the Romantic version of the Other in a father-occluded Imaginary). Jameson remarks in his essay, *Agons of the Pseudo-couple*,

all human relations are bound to have something vaguely ominous about them; and the more heightened moments of scandal or violence prove to be nothing but the convulsive effort to free one's self from one's interlocutor.

(Jameson 1979: 38)

In the *Trilogy* especially, such a convulsive effort is definitively true for the interlocutor of the subject's *own* voice(s), meaning the subject's own ego. The subject makes a convulsive effort to be free of the ventriloquist of the subject's own voice, but as in *Worstward Ho* (1983), fails, fails again, and fails better. (Beckett 1996: 89) Beckett recasts such anxiety not as lack based on an empty position of the father (the anxiety of *sturm und drang*), but as something far more general, a brilliantly inventive, comical and philosophical version of stranger danger, including the stranger danger of myself.

In Lady Gregory's *The Rising of the Moon* a shared sense of contingency (couched as a badge of humane nationalism), between the sergeant as the law and the 'Man' as the outlaw, is gratifying enough as to overcome the sergeant's pleasure of pursuing and capturing the wanted criminal (though there is a reward of one hundred pounds on his head). This takes place though the Man admits his identity to the sergeant. Contingency proves to be the key (the scene is set on a 'quay') feeling between the two men, beyond the application of the law. Birth is one of the darker contingencies drawing couples or pseudo-couples together - a better one is humour, and an untrustworthy humour for choice, such as, "Perhaps I'm remembering things", instead of "forgetting things". (*T*, 9)

So, the pure ear and pure text, are pure cod. Listening, the transitivity of being, deception, and upsetting the law with an unstoppable voice are anyway mainstays of Irish comedy and tragedy. Beckett, Lady Gregory, Yeats and Synge all shared a disregard for Law and language as scopic, since the "eye is an oversight" on the signifier. (*T*, 376) The visual pieties of a language based on the assumptive prerogatives of the visual as natural, real and full, are not to be trusted or enjoyed so much as the delicious deceptions of the signifier and voice.

As for truth, truth might arrive anywhere and nowhere, perhaps only in the rhyming shallows of language. In Lady Gregory's *Spreading the News* (1904), Bartley Fallon is a comically self-pitying stage sort of Irishman, one who both mourns and revels at the prospect of his death.¹²

¹² The play is a short, one-act comic play written for the opening night of the Abbey Theatre, 27 December 1904.

Indeed it's a poor country and a scarce country to be living in. But I'm thinking if I went to America it's long ago I'd be dead!... And it's a great expense for a poor man to be buried in America... Maybe it's yourself will be buried in the graveyard of Cloonmara before me, Mary Fallon, and I myself that will be dying unbeknownst some night, and no one a-near me... any misfortune coming to this world, it's on myself it pitches, like a flock of crows on seed potatoes. (Gregory 1970: 16-17)

Death is connected to images of countries, graveyards, and finally a bare ploughed field, with crows for a symbol of death. Images of death grow smaller and smaller, and finish on a seed. The rhythms and rhyme of the finish, "a flock of crows on seed potatoes", rhyming 'crows' with 'potatoes', steals a pleasure from death as death proceeds to eat the seeds of life. Birth is astride the grave in much Irish theatre, but metre is the thief denying death the final phoneme. Metre is good company in the presence of death - Irish wakes and the singing and laments are made so. However, Gregory's image in Bartley's mouth is neither indulgent nor random - the image recounts the Famine, and failures of the potato crop driving millions to death. A 'death mouth' is talking through a comical 'poor mouth'.

As for death existing only in the Imaginary, plaining in indivisible plenitude, there is Molloy debating to himself about his mother, "Was she already dead when I came? Or did she die only later? I mean enough to bury?" (T, 7) Or Malone asking, "But have I not just passed away?" (T, 252) Death's dominion can be waived with metre, or divided into parts, or simply made a lie, so that the signifier in the 'death mouth' spurs on pleasure and even comedy to be stored in time against the death of flesh.

In *Waiting for Godot*, the death mouth irrevocably meets the 'poor mouth' in the aphasia of Lucky. Lucky too, like Bartley, is fearful of speaking and dying alone, and out of this fear remains tied to a brutal master, Pozzo. Pozzo has, in the words of Christy Mahon, 'destroyed' his one-time benefactor, Lucky, and completely betrayed Lucky's hospitality. In Synge's play, Christy Mahon introduced himself saying how he is "destroyed walking". (1.173; Synge 1968: 103)¹³ Lucky also is destroyed walking, in a different, more cruel way, leading and walking away from Pozzo, but tied to him by a rope, enchained to Pozzo in the enchainments of an Imaginary oriented towards master-slave relations.

¹³ Christy finally is almost destroyed walking, in retrospect, by how far he had to go to attain the position of the father, as he does in the end. He boasts how he will be "like a gallant captain with his heathen slave", meaning his father. (Synge 1968: 146) Typically, it is Oedipal inversion which spells success in a father-occluded Imaginary, as Hamlet was want to talk down to his father.

Once upon a time Lucky had taught Pozzo 'beautiful things', like Caliban did Prospero of noises of the island; in Act II he will be completely dumb. The speech itself, moreover, deteriorates internally as the aphasia grows more pronounced.
(Atkins 1967: 426)

Lucky's initial pseudo-academic rigour ("essy-possy", English pronunciations of *esse* and *posse* — "being" and "being able"), gives way to an aphasiac torrent of traumatised memory, finishing with the

skull in Connemara in spite of the tennis the skull alas the stones Cunard [*final vociferations*] tennis... the stones... so clam... Cunard... unfinished...
(Beckett 1990: 43)

Atkins also notes how instances of 'skull' are added by Beckett in later revisions of the speech. (Atkins 1967: 426) The skull in Connemara is an image insisting on something that cannot be said, or a trauma beneath the flesh and beneath the skull that Beckett himself keeps adding and repeating to the text.

Lucky's trauma might be read as an association between how Cunard liners during the Famine were sailing into the Atlantic past "a skull in Connemara". During the period of the Famine, the Cunard shipping company had become world renowned for becoming the first company to take passengers on regularly scheduled transatlantic departures.¹⁴

On July 4, 1840, *Britannia*, the first ship commissioned under the Cunard name, left Liverpool with a cow on board to supply fresh milk to the passengers on the 14-day transatlantic crossing. The advent of pleasure cruises is linked to the year 1844, and a new industry began.¹⁵

Beckett's poem, *Whoroscope* (1930), won a prize offered by the Cunard heiress, Nancy, who then published the poem. Perhaps the gap between Ireland and Cunard ships going past Connemara (in Gaelic, a name meaning 'descendants of the sea'), closed a little with Beckett's poem, but remains shocked and open in Lucky's speech. There is trauma not only in starving but also a feeling of being watched and starving. While forever unfinished 'famine roads' were being driven through the land by starving people and food was leaving

¹⁴ Deck tennis would not have been played on the first cruise ships, the sport was not yet developed. However, cruise liners were associated with the sport at least from the 1920s onwards. The Merseyside Maritime Museum has photos at <http://www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/online/exhibitions/sport/decktennis.asp>, dated from 1924 [accessed 30th July 2007].

¹⁵ Available online at <http://scriptorium.lib.duke.edu/adaccess/ship-history.html> [accessed 27th July 2007].

Ireland by ship, pleasure ships from Britain were sailing to and fro into the Atlantic, carrying people thrilled with modern technology.

In *How It Is* (1964), there is another haunting mention of the Atlantic Ocean,

The proportion of invention vast assuredly vast proportion... no knowing it's impossible it's not said it doesn't matter it does it did that's superb a thing that matters

that life then said to have been his invented remembered a little of each no knowing *that thing above he gave it to me I made it mine* what I fancied skies especially and the paths he crept along how they changed with the sky and where were you going on the Atlantic in the evening on the ocean going to the isles or coming back the mood of the moment less important *the creatures encountered hardly any always the same I picked my fancy good moments nothing left* (Beckett 1964: 80, italics mine)

The passage encompasses the thoughts of a sailor working on a Cunard liner sailing into the Atlantic Ocean ("what I fancied skies especially"), "going to the [British] isles or coming back", and passing Ireland, thinking on the Famine. Many survivors from the Famine would have left Ireland and travelled to America in the third class, lower decks of Cunard ships. The emigrant flow was so huge it spurred the development of larger, steel hulled boats.¹⁶ Consider the sailor thinking on the technological developments - "The proportion of invention vast assuredly".

In these ships, assuredly, Famine victims would exactly be "creatures hardly encountered," hidden and hiding away in shame, despair and shock at the "vast proportion" of Famine death, a "vast proportion" even the sailor is feared to speak of, "it's impossible it's not said." The phrase, "that thing above he gave it to me I made it mine", recalls Prospero's vile statement, "This thing of darkness I / Acknowledge mine" (5.1. 277-278), to which Caliban directly replies, "I shall be pinched to death." Were not Famine victims pinched to death, by hunger and disease? Their suffering continued on board the ships, and included serious physical and sexual abuse from ships' crews. "I picked my fancy good moments nothing left", enacts the sexual predation of the sailor on emaciated emigrants: "nothing left" of flesh on their bones, or "nothing left" in exchange, if survivors were given promises of food in exchange for sex.¹⁷ "Nothing left" is also referring to survivors as

¹⁶ With actual reference to Cunard shipping, Hyde relates how, "Iron ships, on the other hand, could be built to virtually any size, a factor which was of relevance in accommodating the increasing flood of emigrants after 1850." (Hyde 1975: 29)

¹⁷ "Allegations of overcrowding, insanitary conditions and poor food on board ship were given additional emphasis by *more serious* complaints of inhuman treatment of passengers by shore

"nothing", and the "nothing" who left (emigrated) after the Famine - how much resonance might that interpretation have for Beckett's entire oeuvre - the philosophical hulks of 'nothing' and 'unhappiness' competing for comic supremacy are the same 'nothing' and 'unhappiness' of skeletal survivors after the Famine. In *Company* (1980), Beckett writes,

A dead rat. What an addition to company that would be! A rat long dead.

Might not the hearer be improved? Made more companionable if not downright human.
(Beckett 2003: 36)

What an addition to company Famine would be.

What frights the horror is all that can be said is not from a Famine victim, but from the perspective of a passing sailor, a man who is frightened to intimate even to himself the extent of the catastrophe, who could not speak of or hardly imagine it, and yet was willing to steal pleasure from its victims.¹⁸ After trauma, who is to say where death impinges most when the traumatised may not be able to speak, and the lamenting sounds untranslatable? All that there is, is listening.

With any persona in the *Trilogy*, the reader cannot be sure how death occurs, either when or where. As Christopher Ricks points out for *Malone Dies*, in "a first person narrative, you can never be sure." (Ricks 1993: 115) In *Malone Dies*, in "Heideggerian terms, the voice gives itself the possibility of death *as possibility on the first page*". (Critchley 1998: 118, italics in original) The voice wryly and mournfully, says,

I could die today, if I wished, merely by making a little effort. But it is just as well to let myself die, quietly, without rushing things. Something must have changed.
(*T*, 179)

This punctiliousness serves an edgy humour and the speaker's delicate and thorny mannerisms - a speeding pulse and noisy heartbeat are surely those "rushing things" the

officials and ships' crews." (Hyde 1975: 65, italics mine) Hyde's inference is clear enough, that there was behaviour taking place even *more serious* than the deadly physical conditions on board. Ship conditions and the treatment of emigrants become known to be so outrageous as to force U.K. government legislation addressing what was becoming a public scandal, and this in a period of extreme *laissez faire* economics, as the Famine demonstrated. The Passenger Act of 1855 provided for "separate water closets... and ventilation in all passenger quarters". (Hyde 1975: 65) An Amendment in 1863 also stipulated, "any ships carrying more than 300 passengers were required to sail with a doctor on board. These drastic provisions transformed the whole process of carrying emigrants; by implication their very necessity gave credence to the dreadful conditions which must have prevailed before the Act was passed." (Hyde 1975: 65)

¹⁸ As I argue Foster and his class do, in Carleton's *The Black Doctor*.

speaker would choose to avoid. Suicide is just too loud - nothing and unhappiness clash again - but sounds, those rushing things, are what prove so important to life in so many unexpected ways. Sounds change things, in the end, and at the end of the *Trilogy* there is the famous reprise, "in the silence you don't know, you must go on, can't go on, I'll go on." (*T*, 418) Changing his mind or persona seems to be the narrator's prerogative, a part of his feminine charms. Yet always possessing the voice, going on and on, consistently brings to Beckett's mind not only the inevitability of change but also the inevitability of death.

The twentieth century was what Beckett called "the times of great massacres". (cited Badiou 2003: 136) The 'you' of Beckett's second person deictic, as in *Company* (1980), may even be interpreted as a melancholic reference to the finger of Lord Kitchener in the recruiting poster declaiming, "Your Country Needs YOU."¹⁹ Beckett's culture lived in an aphasiac shadow of the Famine, and Beckett's boyhood was lived in the period of the Great War. How must that have been? Where is death, if not everywhere? How can it be spoken? How might it be spoken? Trauma lies in the realm of silence, mystery, and impossibility - and when I refer to 'Lucky's trauma', how can I know it is not Beckett's trauma and lamentation?

The very immortality of the invocatory drive leaves an indelible intimation of mortality on consciousness, and mortality is central to Beckett's sublime love of listening, and how the "millions of different sounds, always the same, recurring without pause, are all one needs to sprout a head," (*T*, 357), and perhaps Beckett's sensitivity to sounds and voices arose from the uncountable deaths which took place not far in time or space from Beckett. This sensitivity could be turned to others. Here is how Anna McMullan ends her essay, "*Irish / postcolonial beckett*" (2006), in hope,

In Beckett's work, the dehiscence of the spatial and the temporal coordinates of self, family or nation, might allow the space, body, or voice of the other to emerge in a different relation to the self. Indeed, it might provide 'an inkling of the terms in which our condition is to be thought again'.

(McMullan 2006: 107)²⁰

¹⁹ Designed by Alfred Leete (1916), or similarly, "I Want You for U.S. Army", by James Montgomery Flagg, (1917).

²⁰ McMullan's quotation is from 'Capital of the Ruins' in O'Brien (1986: 337). 'Capital of the Ruins' is Beckett's pained term for the city of Saint-Lô, a strategic crossroad almost totally destroyed during the Battle of Normandy in World War II - it was questionable whether to rebuild the city or to leave the ruins intact as a testimony.

Adorno linked catastrophe to continuing silence, and how the "violence of the unutterable is mimed by the dread of mentioning it." (Adorno 1969: 86) Roach, listening to the silences between Estragon and Vladimir in *Waiting for Godot*, calls them "liturgical silences", an example of "devotional practices" carried over to "secular performance events", and for Roach the silences rustle with "All the dead voices" of the Irish Famine. (Roach 2001: 308, 311) Beckett's logic of metonymy is bound to obscure any answer to any question and often ends with the Beckettian 'grey' where any emotion might have any name, an inhuman prospect as such. At its worse, such as in Lucky's profoundly repetitious and somehow intercessionary speech, the confusion and trailing dots of the void at the finish is profoundly unknowing, and desperate. All there is, is listening. Beckett's profoundly repetitious, sublimely intercessionary quality might be heard as modernist Rosaries said for all the dead bodies and dead voices of great massacres.

Adam Piette describes how the rhythms of Beckett's texts, especially the later prose texts, may often leave us "unaccountably moved". (Piette 1996: 237) The final lines of *Ill Seen Ill Said* are, "No. One moment more. One last. Grace to breath that void. Know happiness." (Beckett 1996: 86) There is a momentous, child-like use of language conveying fantastical depths of emotion, an almost childish gasp at certainty ("One last"), and hope of intercession ("Grace") and happiness, an ending Lucky never reached. Piette ventures the prose rhythms of the later texts have a delicate, tentatively enjoyed, sentimental meaning to Beckett. What then can emerge in Beckett's writing is a soft-bodied voice of indistinct memories providing respite from a metonymy which otherwise compels Beckett to keep exploring an impotency of feeling. The late prose texts are Beckett's more gentle forms of prayer.

Yet there is undoubtedly one prayerful sound and sense pattern which does emerge strongly at the end of the *Trilogy*, one Beckett would have had drilled into him reading the Old Testament, and that is parallelism. Parallelism is a rhetorical device arranging a composition so that words, phrases, clauses, or sentences are equally weighted by a recurrent syntactical similarity.²¹ For instance, in Psalm 1:1: "Blessed is the man that

²¹ Parallelism has an X - X' structure, with X' a variation on X. The operation of chiasmus is a reversed parallelism. Chiasmus has the structure of X-not-X (paradoxical chiasmus) or X-not-X' (dialectical chiasmus) and is *extremely* popular in contemporary literary theory for expressing paradoxes and dialectical contradiction. Derrida and Žižek are the two most well-known, and highly regarded, practitioners of chiasmus and impossibilities. J. Hillis Miller observes, Derrida with his "X-not-X formulations... of taking away with one hand what it gives with another, and then giving it back again", may be rounded up to "a gesture of refraining... Derrida's fundamental and defining act, his ground without ground." (Miller 2007: 280; 288; 292) Derrida and Žižek both have reinvigorated parallelism, or idealism. Belsey takes Žižek to task for his

walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful." Beckett is a little more comic and self-critical:

If only I could make an effort, an effort of attention, to try and discover what's happening, what's happening to me, what then, I don't know, I've forgotten my apodosis, but I can't, I don't hear any more, I'm sleeping, they call that sleeping..." (T, 406)

There is a position of the father in Beckett - the 'unnamable' itself becomes a metaphor for the 'human condition' - isn't the Old Testament G-d the original unnamable? - although the exposition of the metaphor's vehicle has such a grandiloquent, metonymic tenor. Beckett is even blasphemously reinhabiting the stereotype of the unnamable, in his own prayerful, bitter, discontented, hilarious, self-splitting ways. The ending to *The Unnamable* is one long, concentrated burst of parallelism, a psalm of Sam Beckett.

Waiting for Godot was the play Beckett wrote almost as light relief during the tribulations of writing the *Trilogy*, and in the play Vladimir and Estragon almost lead parallel lives, as Vladimir waits for Godot, and Estragon waits for Vladimir. There is a good deal of Hamlet in Vladimir. All the time, Vladimir (or "lad-in-ear") is mainly listening to the sound of his own voice, such as declaiming like some Irish, roadside Churchill, "It is not every day that we are needed..." (Beckett 1990: 74) There is a good deal of wry humour going on, and on, and on, and on, but Vladimir's distraction would be maddening in the end, for his company. Estragon occasionally can be very like some *femme fatale*:

Estragon: Let's hang ourselves immediately!

Vladimir: From a bough? [*They go towards the tree.*] I wouldn't trust it.

Estragon: We can always try.

Vladimir: Go ahead.

Estragon: After you.

Vladimir: No, no, you first.

Estragon: Why me?

Vladimir: You're lighter than I am.

Estragon: Just so.

Vladimir: I don't understand.

Estragon: Use your intelligence, can't you? [*Vladimir uses his intelligence.*]

Vladimir: [*Finally.*] I remain in the dark.

Estragon: This is how it is. [*He reflects.*] The bough... the bough... [*Angrily.*]

Use your head, can't you?

Vladimir: You're my only hope.

willingness to "recuperate Lacan for idealism... Delighting in paradox... Žizek thus reduces Lacan's three levels to two." (Belsey 2005: 52, 54, 55) Parallelism is symptomatic of a structural impossibility existing between two lines - any exposition serenading impossibility should be treated with light suspicion - impossibility is how theorists used to define the chance of two parallel lines meeting. See Figure One, note 50.

Estragon: [*With effort.*] Gogo light - bough not break - Gogo dead. Didi heavy -
bough break - Didi alone. Whereas -

Vladimir: I hadn't thought of that.

Estragon: If it hangs you it'll hang anything. (Beckett 1990: 18-19)

Estragon invites them both to kill themselves but then adroitly argues Vladimir should go first, using the fact he is lighter than Vladimir (and reason is supposed to be Vladimir's *forte*, his Vladimir's opinion). Vladimir also labels Estragon as "merciless" and says how, "Nothing is certain when you're about." (Beckett 1990: 16). Estragon is also the 'it' that cannot quite be trusted, yet might be fragile, like the breakable bough of the tree. *La belle dame sans merci* stalks quietly in the wry shape of Estragon, and Estragon loathes the nuisance and obedient bore of a Boy (a representative of the position-as-child). The Boy transfixes Vladimir's attention, *seducing* Vladimir away from Estragon by how the Boy responds easily and willingly to commands from Vladimir, and so would install Vladimir in the position of the father (versus the uncertainty Vladimir feels around Estragon).

Estragon has the tender sensibility to know his own needs on earth, in the present. He brandishes his fists, and at the top of his voice cries out, "God have pity on me!" (Beckett 1990: 71) When Vladimir peevishly asks him (the stage direction is *vexed*), "And me?", Estragon repeats his impassioned cry, "On me! On me! Pity! On me!" (Beckett 1990: 71) It is an incredibly moving moment of vulnerability, honesty and tenderness. This *femme fatale* is not some deadly woman but a man who longs for attention, at a push, from God himself. Estragon begs mercy on a voice and a body in the present, it is a cry to Vladimir to notice and even hold him. Perhaps Estragon (or "oestrogen"?) is only inventing being beaten in the night to get sympathy from Vladimir, whose sense of love is love-as-help, or love-as-pitiless love, the denuded love granted the subject in the position-as-child.

The *femme fatale* may then be interpreted as a male homosocial. The *femme fatale* threatens how men live lives in parallel. It is the gaze of Godot arranging the parallels, just as the gaze of the Listener in *That Time* arranges his own voices to speak in parallel, A, B, and C, none of them acknowledging the other. A fear of touching is the fear of lives led in parallel, bodies inhabited and lives inhibited by a gaze barring the homosocial. This is how pseudo-couples can be numerous in Beckett's work, and indeed in Irish society and far beyond. The lives of the father and the position-as-child are lives led in fear of touching, as much as one is supposed to become the other. They are lives led in parallel, which is why the position-as-child is one of lovelessness. Fear of touching is a fear of the queer, a fear of the signifier. Compulsory heterosexuality is compulsory straightness, or parallelism. A fear

of touching and a fear of the signifier characterises the barred homosocial of a father-occluded Imaginary, irrespective of gender or sexuality.

Edna O'Brien said in an interview, "I continued in a glorious suffering tradition." (Murphy 2001: 212) Vladimir and Estragon are only the same. The frustrated longing for what is the signifier to appear in the pseudo-couple of the romantic couple is what I shall be discussing in the next chapter. The frustrated longing for a signifier to connect men and women living otherwise in parallel, is the heart of romance.

Chapter 5 - Edna O'Brien

A romantic feminism seeks to make public, make political, the private experiences of women among themselves: their diaries, their journals, their conversations. The problem here is not in the nature of the object but in the claim to be able to make them public. The assumption is that publicisation does not alter their essential nature, merely corrects an external censorship, a repression, that had up till now excluded women's private thoughts from serious consideration in the male public sphere. And this assumption is false... what is private in the strong sense is the structurally secluded; like the Unconscious, it will not be made public as such, it is systematically dysfunctional. (Readings 1995: 26-7)

In 1927, three years before Edna O'Brien was born, Kevin O'Higgins in the Irish parliament stated the government "was not constitutionally bound to impose an absolute equal burden of citizenship on all its citizens." (cited Valiulis 1997: 167) The debate was on women's service on juries and for the government, the privilege, supposedly, of women *not* serving on juries.¹ At the end of the debate, statutory jury service was left in the preserve of men, and the government 'exempted' women.² Women's rights and republicanism in the revolutionary period might have evolved in tandem, but the Irish State desisted in legislation between 1927 and the 1937 Constitution from any duty to implement equal rights and obligations between men and women.³

¹ Jury service in Ireland was historically freighted with associations of political interference and uncertain justice. The Coercion Acts when in force lowered precipitately the requirements for evidence. Due to violence and sectarian tensions throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, whether or not a fair trial by jury was even possible was a question of debate – "jurors were particularly reluctant to enforce the law in agrarian and political cases." (Jackson et al. 1999: 205) This reluctance then led to attempts to load juries so as to obtain convictions, particularly in the same type of agrarian cases. In *The Playboy of the Western World*, Sara satirically toasts the loaded juries who "fill their stomachs selling judgements of the English law". (Synge 1998: 119)

² The Act was the Cosgrave government's Juries Act (1927) §5, which did not exclude but exempted women – women could still apply for inclusion, but for instance, from 1966 to 1976, just two women actually served on a jury. The developing medico-judicial discourse of power in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was "essentially [a] parental-puerile, parental-childish discourse," aligning crime with perversity and women with children. (Hayes and Urquhart 2001: 80) Women as infantilised subjects were not only suspect as jurors, but even should be safe from exposure to the 'perversity' of crime. Women such as Hannah Sheehy-Skeffington (founder of the Irish Women's Franchise League in 1908) vigorously contested this strain of jurisprudence. The Act was finally challenged successfully in 1972 by two women, Mairín De Burca and Mary Anderson, in *de Burca & Anderson v. Attorney General*. The Supreme Court ruled the original deposition unconstitutional and "undisguisedly discriminatory on the ground of sex only." The judgement is online at www.womenslinkworldwide.org/pdf/co_eur_ire_deburca.pdf. The 1976 Juries Act then redressed the discriminatory basis of the 1927 Act.

³ In 1932, married women were barred from working as teachers or civil servants (a ban which extended even to widows). In 1934, contraceptives were banned, and in 1935, the Conditions of

Citizenship for women was not a question of rights and obligations. In the case of women, government was claiming it had the right to decide what aspects of citizenship women should enjoy, that citizenship was in its gift... Government thus became the arbiter of citizenship, the mediator between women and the State. Because government positioned itself between women and the State, it thus reinforced the derivative, indirect nature of women's citizenship.

(Valiulis 1997: 167)

Irish women were thus selectively positioned as children, defined yet excluded from full participation in citizenship. In jury legislation, normative, gendered spheres of the exercise of Irish jurisprudence had been consolidated so the voices of women were expectantly diminished. Defenders of women's rights complained of situations that could lead to travesties of justice whereby,

Young girls charged with infanticide and prostitution would be judged by twelve men who, it was claimed by women's groups, would have no empathy whatsoever with the accused.

(Beaumont 1997: 570)⁴

Women's organisations protested against the adoption of the new Bill and were supported in the *Seanad* by Senators Jennie Wyse Power and Eileen Costello. Senator Wyse Power argued that if such a Bill were passed "the civic spirit that is developing in women will be arrested". Kevin O'Higgins did not, however, share the Senator's concern and stated in the *Dáil* that it was "the normal and natural function of women to have children." (Beaumont 1997: 569-570)

Irish nationalism may have achieved Statehood, but the new State had still to construct an illusory unity distinguished from England and commensurate with "non-partisanship against a backdrop of post-civil war divisiveness." (Smith 2004: 209) An idealisation and objectification of women would become one bulwark of unity, a bulwark which would require "a series of legislative vehicles with which to constrain women so that they might visibly conform to the prescribed national paradigm." (Smith 2004: 210-211)⁵ The

Employment Bill introduced by Sean Lemass gave government the power to limit the number of women working in any branch of industry.

⁴ Hanna Sheehy-Skeffington in 1928 took up just one such case, of a young servant girl, Mary Cole, who had murdered two children belonging to her employer (Collection list 47, manuscript MS 33,806 (16) in the National Library of Ireland). Cole was found guilty and only age saved her from the death penalty.

⁵ For instance, the Censorship of Publications Act (1929), the Illegitimate Children (Affiliation Orders) Act (1930), the Legitimacy Act (1931), the Registration of Maternity Homes Act (1930), and the Dance Halls Act (1935). The Carrigan Report (1931) made a sweeping review of standing legislation and state policy, and culminated in the subsequent Criminal Law Amendments Act (1935). Smith argues the Carrigan Report set out to establish "an official state attitude toward 'sexual immorality,' and the subsequent legislation [in 1935] authorised Ireland's containment culture" (2004: 209). "Rising illegitimacy rates and unassailable proof of sexual crimes against children" were made evident by the Carrigan Report, but it was "clearly undesirable that such a view of condition in the *Saorstát* [Free State] should be given wide circulation", and the Carrigan Report itself became a de facto censored document (Smith 2003: 215).

paradigm for women would be motherhood, and by the 1937 Constitution, the Irish "Free State" formally invested Irish women as mothers. Article 41, section two, effects the transition of women to motherhood:

In particular, the State recognises that by her life within the home, woman gives to the State a support without which the common good cannot be achieved.

The State shall, therefore, endeavour to ensure that mothers shall not be obliged by economic necessity to engage in labour to the neglect of their duties in the home.

The section subliminally resembles a contract holding up a Gothic bargain and quid pro quo – *only if* a woman becomes a mother is she then deserving of State support. In these difficult circumstances, the "Irish women's movement clearly retreated post-independence". (Connolly 2002: 25)⁶ Fertility was being constructed as one of the conditions of possibility underpinning the Irish Constitution, and the Irish family effectively operated as a "semi-state" (the term for private commercial companies owned by the public government).⁷ In Catholic Ireland, the womb in a fantasmatic sense was everywhere and nowhere, for in fact, the womb had been nationalised. Access to land, comprising the *jouissance* of nineteenth century nationalism, was obverted in the twentieth century to access to a womb.

In her memoir *Mother Ireland* (1976), O'Brien wrote of the reasons anyone had for leaving the Ireland of her youth: "Loneliness, the longing for adventure, the Roman Catholic Church, or *the family tie that is more umbilical* than among any other race on earth?" (O'Brien 1999: 15, italics mine) Children of the Irish, semi-state family were attached by an umbilical cord to "Mother Ireland", the nation's umbrella sign. For any independent women who dared explore sexuality outside fertility, the umbilical tie would become strangulating. The umbilical cord attaching a woman to a family was her only entry to the symbolic system of Catholic Ireland.

Consider how in *The Country Girls*, Caitheleen's mother held her "close as if she would never let me go. I was everything in the world to her, everything." (1988: 6) The scene is

⁶ An ironic reading of the Irish Constitution of 1937 might note how with the State insisting in such a sanguine way on how the State cannot function without mothers, what chance lesser beings, i.e. men, leading independent lives and functioning without mothers?

⁷ Examples would be ESB, the Electricity Supply Board, or Bord Gáis Éireann, the Irish Gas Board.

one of terror, as much for the child as for the mother. The existential separation between the child in the mother's womb, the child outside the mother's body, or even the mother in the child's body, are all painfully blurred. Another time Caithleen's mother watches over her all night when Caithleen goes to sleep with a sweet in her mouth - "I was afraid you'd choke if you swallowed it whole, so I stayed awake just in case." (O'Brien 1988: 5) The mother is a submissive yet highly ambivalent supervisor of the child. She will not remove the sweet and yet is utterly terrified of mishap. The mother has neither authority, not removing the sweet, but yet acts as if she is still utterly responsible, watching over the child. No doubt a ferocious self-negation would overtake her should anything happen to the child, and yet she toys with the possibility of watching the child choke to death.⁸ Being compelled to the impossible task of watching over another's life day and night, everywhere, almost compels her to murder that life.

The painful blurring is maternal *jouissance*. Mothers had restricted access to the Law of the Father - how women could not place flesh on the signifiers of guilt or innocence is almost perfectly symptomatic - yet women must bear and suffer the Law of the Father within their own bodies, having to normalise guilt or innocence as a father sees fit, having to embody guilt or innocence in a cult of sexual purity to which men are not equally subject, and having to bear the burden of the flesh in so far as motherhood is their singular, public, allotted role. Caithleen's mother is projecting onto the child her dispossession of and yet subjection to the Law of the Father, telling the child of her miserable night, holding the child in a terrified grip. Later in London, Caithleen tells a psychiatrist how she feels she "sort of destroys [people], with weakness." (O'Brien 1988: 476) Destroying herself and the girl child by weakness is a way of describing a woman's double bind in the family, of being responsible, yet without having authority. The child, the child's safety, the child's innocence, and the family structure itself are the mother's responsibility, and yet the mother must stand apart from it like Caithleen's mother next to the bed, without authority. This double bind was useful for asserting a political difference, how in Ireland, women did not need authority, since Irish men were fair and just in the use of authority, unlike their English counterparts.

⁸ The scenario is akin to the dream described by Freud in *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900), 'Father, can't you see I'm burning?' Or as Lacan describes the scene's ambivalence, "the voice of the approaching child, his face full of reproach and, on the other hand, that which causes it and into which he sinks, the invocation, the voice of the child, the solicitation of the gaze..." (Lacan 1998: 70). In *The Country Girls* it is rather, 'Mother, can't you see I'm choking?' O'Brien's mother and girl 'dream' of death by the death of the voice, while Freud's father and son 'dream' of death in the death of the flesh.

Within the congruence of economic protectionism and social conservatism concentrated around the chief overlapping economic as well as social unit of Irish society, the family-operated farm, "all of the important decisions of a woman's life... were made with the family as the backdrop of the decision." (Akenson 2001: 161) A strategic allegiance between Church and State constructed an identity for Irish women solely in domestic terms – "women were mothers, women were wives" - and post-independence, Irish civil society was reconfigured to assure the primacy of Catholic morality, so that the national character, including a rigid conservatism in sexual matters above all, would serve as a clearly visible difference between England and Ireland. (Howes 2002: 923-924)

As well, the single sex education structure inherited in 1922 ran on for decades under the ministry of Catholic religious orders, and these orders instilled those qualities prized by Catholic-tinged capitalism in its citizens: orderliness, discipline, obedience, and self-control. These were the disciplines expected of Caithleen Brady. Church investment and the political legitimacy of the education system, always strengthening itself in the Dublin civil service, forged a strong alliance between the convent and the state to impose such values particularly on women, who were responsible for all of orderliness, discipline, obedience, and self-control in the family, without having any independent authority. These were years of "missed opportunities for the state to... recognise [women] in any meaningful manner." (Clear 2000: 212) Caithleen Brady's dismissal from school, work in a grocery store in Dublin, and then later a delicatessen shop in Bayswater, all are signs of a failure to recognise a talented woman - only 'pure', Catholic exemplars of motherhood were recognised, or indeed, over-promoted.

The Constitutional enclosure (or veiling) of women as either children or mothers inside the family meant legal opinion of Edna O'Brien's fiction found it deserving of censorship. O'Brien's first six novels were banned for two main reasons. O'Brien has spoken of how her upbringing in Ireland left her "very wounded" in life (O'Hara 1993: 324), with an "empty void within."⁹ In an interview in 1984, O'Brien said her major theme was

loss as much as... love. Loss is every child's theme because by necessity the child loses its mother and bearings... so my central theme is loss – loss of love, loss of self, loss of God." (cited Pelan 2006: 58)

Emotional and spiritual loss suffuses her fiction, such as Caithleen Brady's fate in *The Country Girls* trilogy, but talking only of loss would unfairly limit O'Brien's art as close to

⁹ With Jan Moir, "Doing the real thing," in the *Guardian* newspaper, 16th September, 1992.

despair. O'Brien not only did not shy from revealing a propinquity to despair from the monotony of women's life in rural Ireland, she wrote of and showed women willing to seek out and experiment with every droll, exciting, or barred pleasure, from eating, talking, looking, and dressing up, to kissing, imagining, love-making and writing.

There are many moments of droll pleasure in *The Country Girls*, such as Caithleen and Baba's relish for "two tomatoes, and a jar of chicken and ham paste". (O'Brien 1988: 156) If the excitement seems amusing - O'Brien means readers to enjoy their gauche and determined greed - the excitement had a historical context:

The Irish Homestead, George Russell's journal which was the unofficial organ of the broad based movement towards agricultural reform and social improvement in the early twentieth century, regularly lamented the 'monotony' of the tea, bread, potatoes, bacon and cabbage diet of the country people, and recommended more variety. (Clear 2000: 28)

To eat mashed potatoes as pandy, or colcannon, was "pure penance. To eat anything ordinary was... but a glacé cherry was as precious as a jewel." (*Mother Ireland* 1999: 78) As Mary Burke writes of O'Brien's early writing, taboos over food intake can be interpreted as "vehicles for sly female subversion." (Burke 2006: 233)

Just how women might take not only food, but affection, wherever it was offered or wherever it might be found, was undoubtedly a crucial reason O'Brien's fiction was labelled "a smear on Irish womanhood." (Carlson 1990: 76) Edna O'Brien earned a "reputation as a scandalous woman" for focusing on "the sexual passions and betrayed emotions of a whole generation of Irishwomen." (Kiberd 1996: 566) Their 'illegitimate' search for affection and love was the scandal.

For instance, in *A Pagan Place*, a visiting doctor sets a woman on a table for examination, but, as the woman's spying daughter sees, "his hand was somewhere under her apron, in the unknown." (O'Brien 1970: 42) This never named daughter later re-enacts (in second-person narrative), the scene between mother and doctor,

opening your legs a bit and putting the soft velvet paw of a boy doll there, squeezing with all your might and then when the needles of pleasure came getting furious with him and chastising him and throwing him face down on the floor with his legs and his jockey's cap any old way. (O'Brien 1970: 46)

The girl turns upon herself, divided between guilt and sexual pleasure, and then re-enacts the division, by throwing away the substitute 'object' provoking her sexual pleasure, the

male jockey-figurine toy. The girl's sexual curiosity is first circumvented by ignorance, then shame, and years later, by leaving Ireland for Belgium and convent life.¹⁰ Atmosphere rises from repetition, and the atmosphere in *A Pagan Place* is one where a repetition of 'social disgrace' is never far. Female disgrace is general over O'Brien's Ireland, and the anxiety of always being fantasmatically watched places the girl child in an excruciating show-trial, demonstrated in her play with the jockey-doll, followed by self-condemnation and self-loathing. The atmosphere around O'Brien's young female protagonists make for fear, courage, curiosity, comedy, wonder, disappointment, and above all guilt, in so much premature excess that as adults they are already emotionally exhausted, and destroyed by weakness, after such a 'life' as a child.

However, the doctor's ethical 'failure' is welcome for the mother, entirely deprived as she is of affection in a loveless marriage - the mother, scandalously, does not throw her 'jockey-doctor' away.

The Catholic Hierarchy of Ireland had fundamentally re-imagined and reconstructed post-independent Ireland as like the early Church, with a concomitant, Pauline attitude to sexual desire.¹¹ The apex of intervention in regulating State policy over family matters was the debacle over the Mother and Child Bill, in 1950-51. The Catholic hierarchy and doctors in private practice scuttled a scheme to alleviate ill-health and hardship among women rearing large families in poor circumstances. Two conditions were to be conserved - a profitable income stream among doctors in private practice, and exclusive Catholic paternalism over family matters, especially the politics of sexuality and fertility. These two

¹⁰ Many of the more adventurous women joined convents and would have access to the Law without being mothers per se, if still they had a Mother Superior in charge of their disciplined lives (a displaced version of what they are escaping, but with extra degrees of freedom). However, there may be a more radical interpretation and pleasure. G.K. Chesterton made the point, discussed by Žižek, "orthodoxy is the highest subversion; serving the Law is the highest adventure." (Žižek 2003: 56) In missionary work the subject's "highest act of freedom is the display of *amor fati*, the act of freely assuming what is otherwise necessary," or the assumption of love as the Law. (Žižek 2003: 56) *Dancing at Lughnasa* (1990) considers, through the character of Jack, a returned priest, the encounter between an adventurous Catholic person with paganism. Irish missionaries were asked to repeat the Church's role in Ireland expunging a 'pagan' culture, yet Jack's experience shows that annihilation may be more incomplete than appreciated. Irish missionary zeal might well have been a displaced curiosity for paganism.

¹¹ Pagan culture valued the position of the child (imagined for instance as Pan), as a symbol of sex which overcame death. The child is the sign of overcoming death. Versus this, in the Christian reversal, especially in the Pauline tradition, death overcame sex, and sex was to be avoided except in marriage for procreation. Procreation was the only concession to sex, in a conflicted Christian tradition with a deeply ambivalent attitude to fertility - see Discussion 3, note 69. Pagan antiquity instead pathologised chastity, but the overcoming of death through procreation then tinged sex with sadness at mortality. Christianity reversed that relation and sexuality was "no longer the remedy for death; it was the cause of death." (Cousins 1985: 145)

conditions comprised the actual 'Good' of the 1937 Irish State. Pessimism and discipline dominated the sanctioned variety of sex, and marriage was itself,

now the space of a long, hard discipline of sexual restraint. Christian sexual intercourse must be deliberate, solemn and decorous; it must be purged of plebeian excitement and dedicated to the possible issue. The regulation of the body moves from the Greek concern with a daytime politics to the Christian night of the bed. On this piece of furniture the soul's struggle must be decided...
(Cousins 1985: 145)

The young unnamed girl in *A Pagan Place* is already racked by the struggle. Anything outside the purvey of Catholic orthodoxy was branded pagan.¹² Female pleasure, even in private like the daughter's in *A Pagan Place*, came with surfeits of guilt and self-loathing.¹³ O'Brien lamented in *Mother Ireland* how the

children inherit a trinity of guilts (a Shamrock): the guilt for Christ's Passion and Crucifixion, the guilt for the plundered land, and the furtive guilt for the mother frequently defiled by the insatiable father. (O'Brien 1999: 15)

Declining sexual activity was the expected standard of feminine sexuality. If what is beyond the imaginary circumference of the Catholic family unit was dangerous and seductive, that limit paled beside O'Brien writing about the desire between the mother and doctor in *A Pagan Place*, not so as to highlight and condemn the doctor, but the needs to which the doctor answered.

If the doctor has betrayed his profession's ethics by a sexual relationship with a patient, O'Brien still portrays him as potentially a kind man, one who even "nearly succumbed" to offering sympathy to Emma, returned from Dublin, unmarried and pregnant. (O'Brien 1970: 128) When the doctor gestures to Emma with some sympathy, Emma's father intervenes and says, "what a traitor he was, what a turncoat." (O'Brien 1970: 128) Emma gestures an entreaty to her mother, who says it is "no use currying favour with her." (O'Brien 1970: 128) While, "Only mothers were safe to be with. Mothers were best," the love of a mother had its quick circumvention in the word of a father. (O'Brien 1999: 66) In

Chastity has always been a life-denying but positive component of Christianity, *in a pagan world*.

¹² Mary Daly's book on emigration has one chapter entitled, "A Ticket to London is a ticket to Hell". Emigration was near next to paganism. Daly discusses how until the end of the 1960s, Irish government policy was to effectively wash its hands of responsibility for emigrants abroad. In a "dramatic break with the past", Dr. Hillery stated in 1968 how, "as Minister for Labour I believe that I have a degree of responsibility to those members of the country's work force who cannot for the time being at least be absorbed at home". (Daly 2006: 318)

¹³ Another sign the position-as-child does not have the ability to create its own privacy.

a domestic environment holding most dear the sexual purity and policing of the girl child, mothers especially were expected to normalise the process, on behalf of the father.

Jokes are made to both voice and police the issue of refraining from sexual activity. Earlier in the novel, her parents praise the unnamed daughter for knowing about Napoleon and his "demanding wife," Josephine, but then the mother shivered, and the way she shivered, "made everyone else shiver." (O'Brien 1970: 52) Later on, after her father rebuffs the doctor for being a turncoat, Emma too begins to shiver and,

From the way she shivered it was evident that she thought they were going to kill her. Her movements were beyond her governing, legs, knees, teeth, everything, chattered. (O'Brien 1970: 128)

Emma's mother has normalised shivering as the expression and communication of the body between the two women - shivering becomes a norm. The father asks if the shivering "could be prevented. The doctor said it was a moot point." (O'Brien 1970: 128) The women shiver with repressed speech (perhaps repressed excitement), and the two men in charge of them question each other and repair to legalese. The two women, in the presence of a law assigned exclusively to the two men, *can* only shiver, either for good or ill. The scene between the two men repeats the absence of women on juries, 'shivering' outside of the law.¹⁴

O'Brien's fiction takes the policing of women and shows how the stifled, unspoken and censored desires of both sexes created not only conflicted images of men as jockey-doctors for a girl child, but a warren of distorted images of proclivities and perversities were given to the other sex. In *Down by the River*, one man saw "beneath the outrage was the jealousy of a thwarted woman seething over her own lost, never-ever-tasted delight of being thirteen and fourteen and fifteen," while the same woman, "hated him for the cravenness, the soft spot which he and every other man under the sun had for young, malleable flesh." (O'Brien 1997: 170) Two parallel, cruel strands of envy perverted the expression of sexuality in Ireland, not only in each generation between men and women, but between generations, especially between mothers and daughters as mothers held daughters as their responsibility.

¹⁴ See Mahon (1987) and (1994) for a review of women's rights from a left perspective. Mary Robinson has defied this lack of representation in both her personal career and advocacy of women's rights, exhorting women to act more in concert, study the legal system, lobby politicians, approach reform by the judicious use of test cases, and engage with unions more actively since "equality law cannot be fully effective until there is a healthy jurisprudence developed in the Labour Court". (Robinson 1993: 101)

O'Brien refused to only shiver, and suffered not only censorship and denunciations, but also a great deal of damage to her relation with her mother. "Paper never refused ink," was one of the more caustic remarks O'Brien's mother's offered on her daughter's literary career. (Freeman 2006) One meaning is how paper has no control over what is written on it (and so, reader beware), but another meaning refers to sexual promiscuity and how the female body could, but never should, become like paper. The literary and sexual are bundled and censored, and O'Brien's mother castigated her daughter for exploring literary as well as sexual desire, thus tainting the reputation of both mother and daughter.¹⁵

Anne O'Dowd points out that amid the tasks of housework, above all, "the most important part of work with the house which the women both made and had to uphold was its reputation." (O'Dowd 2001: 214) Reputation had significant economic and cultural implications - women were disenfranchised in public (such as jury service, or government posts barred to mothers), but in private the mother was responsible for making the household fit for public consumption. Indeed, the mother most of all was there to "give law to the household, to provide a *nomos* for the *oikos*... to make it public, as a system." (Readings 1995: 23) Irish women did have power as mothers, but power restricted to normalising the domestic system of government, especially rationalising its systematic economic viability. This is the self-shattering responsibility Caithleen's mother feels watching over Caithleen as she sleeps with a sweet in her mouth, holding onto Caithleen as if the child is everything in the world to her, watching in despair as her rabidly irresponsible, alcoholic husband drinks and gambles their wealth away in drunken binges at racecourses. The priest excuses Caithleen's father and explains to her how, "Every man takes a drink. It's the climate." (O'Brien 1988: 271). This is pure contempt, a sign of how a woman is always responsible in the stead of a man. Women thus were being defined by the law but fundamentally excluded from its access, and yet men with access to the Law, still bore little or no responsibility.¹⁶

Alongside a Catholic fetish of female sexual purity, continental political agendas were becoming fixated on biological versions of purity. In the 1930s, biological purity became a continent-wide political issue - de Valera himself endured anti-Semitic attacks in the Dáil – and Irish women were lead to know that they must

¹⁵ This bundling and censoring is a sign of how the feminine position is immersed in the Symbolic.

¹⁶ Catholic Irish men become stereotypes of either good or bad, the stereotype as the subject without responsibility whose flesh is inside a community but whose legal existence is outside, as discussed in Chapter 7 for Friel.

understand their responsibilities as breeders and reproduce that biological Irishness in as pure a state as possible... to pass on Irishness from mother to child.
(Harris 2002: 247)

Caithleen Brady taking a Jewish lover, Eugene, vitiated many codes of accepted behaviour. If Ireland could be a congeries of conflicting political interests (as the formation of different political parties in the 1930s shows), Irish womanhood was to remain pure, fixed and unsullied in a changing world, an icon of Catholic purity and pastoral, rural virtues.

Government policy worked against the urbanisation of Irish society partly for such religious and social reasons.

Industrial policy in the 1930s was better geared towards generating employment throughout the country in the short run rather than towards building up a self-supporting Irish industrial sector. The preoccupation with regional dispersion reflects this...Policy discriminated against Dublin for sociopolitical reasons.
(Ó Gráda 1994: 398)

Caithleen's internal migration to Dublin transgressed against government economic policy. If urbanisation could not be prevented, then the reprobation of urban, plebeian carnality became central to Irish Catholicism. If the bourgeois, Catholic 'civilising' process could not arrest the growth of cities, that civilising was then "based on increased internal control and an inculcation of shame and guilt about the body," and this civilising process "never lost its religious associations." (Inglis 1998: 131-2) Caithleen Brady in *The Country Girls* and the two sisters in *A Pagan Place* are two of O'Brien's most intimate and personal renditions of Irish girlhood confronted with stigmatisation for stepping away from prescribed standards of feminine purity and civility. Though "Edna O'Brien is a writer more often judged as dealing with private passions than the wider world of politics," (Ingman 2003: 253) it must be recognised such private passions and their policing constituted the pinnacle of the public sphere of politics. The reputation of women coloured not only the reputation of a family but that of the nation, or Mother Ireland.

A major part of O'Brien's literary legacy is to show how the girl child and women positioned as children inherited a lovelessness, not by their person but in the position-as-child itself. A child or a woman may be loved as a person, but those positioned as a child are precariously on the edge of a spiteful contempt for any perceived diversion from plastic images of purity. If Caithleen Brady wants her body and desire to "...become like rain. Soft. Flowing. Amenable" (O'Brien 1988: 157), it is also true the guilt attached to such desire meant "trying to have no body, to elude it." (*Down by the River*; O'Brien 1997: 38)

The girl child in *A Pagan Place* symbolises the contradictory work of resolving such contradictions, by finally eluding the body. Caithleen Brady's suicide - and the suicides of the protagonists in Marina Carr's dramas - provide proof of the need finally, even in death, to avoid the body. This national reputation for a shattering lovelessness, even for women who abide by the codes of Catholic behaviour (such as Caithleen's mother), is surely the reputation most feared by O'Brien's 'Christian' detractors.¹⁷

Ingman contends O'Brien's work provides an important critique of Irish nationalism which comes close to Kristeva's plea for a more heterogeneous and polyphonic nation-state. This may be true as a romantic feminist project of discovering forgotten voices. While a "broken heart" in the nationalist cause was made famous in an allegorical reading of Mangan's poem, *Dark Rosaleen* (1846), the politics of lovelessness and the ideology of the broken heart, except as it served nationalism, garnered less attention. O'Brien raised the question of reputation and fear of disgrace up to a politics of lovelessness.

Yet an insatiable search for happiness goes on, like a quest, outside the tribe. "I did not tell [my father] this but I now knew that I would never marry one of my own kind." (O'Brien 1988: 252) Instead of the Catholic marriage which turns the flesh of two into one, the counter-veiling relation is courtly love.

For the man, whose lady was entirely, in the most servile sense of the term, his female subject, courtly love is the only way of coming off elegantly from the absence of a sexual relation. (Lacan cited Rose 1982: 48)

If the women cannot access the signifier by a dispossession in Law, there is the promise of romance.

Here too, there is a difficulty. Jacqueline Rose captures the masculine dynamic of courtly love precisely, of how in the man's bound relation of service to the woman, the man shall finally seek at the end of his quest, the woman's "denigration as the precondition for the man's belief in his own soul". (Rose 1982: 48-9) Happily ever after is the prelude to an unavowable denigration. Caithleen Brady denigrates herself in the eyes of her family and her own eyes to raise up Mr. Gentleman's soul, without realising Mr. Gentleman will in the end, after 'rescuing' her, demand the denigration of her soul for his own Symbolic sake.

¹⁷ This lovelessness might also be related to Kristeva's 'abjection', or "the abasement of the needy lover, her emptiness and abjection, before the absolute fullness of the lofty beloved". (Coughlan 2006: 185) However, the text's humour is very important to keep in mind, to balance out the abjection. Coughlan insists that O'Brien must be kept separate from her creations, and O'Brien "attains agency in the act of imagining them and writing them." (Coughlan 2006: 191)

Caithleen is the object of his love in so far as she must finally accept her own exclusion from his system of desire.

When the two meet two years after the failed 'runaway match' Mr. Gentleman says to Caithleen it was for the best, and they would have regretted it.

"I wouldn't have," I said truthfully.

He frowned, and I knew that he was bitterly ashamed of the time we had been together, in each other's arms, kissing and saying "I love you."

"You're young," he said. "Young people do a lot of foolish things."

(O'Brien 1998: 261)

Mr. Gentleman has flung Caithleen away - like the unnamed girl of *A Pagan Place* threw the jockey-doll away - only flinging her away *is* his sexual pleasure. Her denigration is the condition of his own Symbolic consistency or *jouissance* - a matter emphasised in how Caithleen is left abandoned by Mr. Gentleman at an *amusement palace*. On Mr. Gentleman's side (and he is a lawyer), such lovelessness is a pleasurable 'legal' practice, the *jouissance* of the masculine superego, to define and then exclude the woman, since she carries the threat of lack, desire, or the signifier.

The men at least (the doctor and father in *A Pagan Place*, Mr. Gentleman in *The Country Girls*) have compensatory access to the Law, if only guaranteed in the end, in a cheap bargain with other men, by the denigration of women. Note how the priest treats Caithleen with contempt, excusing her father with the climate - this is the Catholic priesthood's own method of denigrating those in the position-as-child.¹⁸ At the end of *The Country Girls*, Caithleen is left shivering in the rain by Mr. Gentleman and goes home.

I cried on the bed for a long time, until I began to feel very cold. Somehow one feels colder after hours of crying. (O'Brien 1998: 175)

The girl or woman is left outside the Law, shivering, and also left shivering outside at the end of 'romance', yet Caithleen goes on searching for romance, as if romance is her only option. Even after its failures Caithleen never seems to learn but constantly repeats the search for romantic love, much to Baba's disgust. This is another feature of the father-occluded Imaginary and its binary divisions. Caithleen must find the signifier attached to a father, and if she cannot in Law, then all that is left is romance.

¹⁸ The denigration was insistently repeated in scandals of paedophile priests who were not removed from service, or access to the flesh of their next, future victims. Access to the flesh is the basis of the Law of the Father.

Within the paradigm of being defined by the Law of the Father in the Imaginary, and yet excluded from the Law of Desire in the Symbolic, the child and female subjects are reduced to body-shifters, the 'I' shifter nameless-except-through-the-father. Children and women are meant to be unable to discriminate beyond Imaginary, binary oppositions - they do not belong on juries, but should understand the binary outcomes of innocent or guilty. There is either, yes, he is innocent or good, or no, he is guilty and bad.

As well, the 'I' in the position-as-child is metaphorically deflected into the body,¹⁹ speaking either with hysterical-talkative prowess and an anxious over-identification with speech (e.g. the gabbling woman), or silence and withdrawal into the body (e.g. the serene nun). (Zizek 2003: 69) The second person deixis of *A Pagan Place* (another deflection of the 'I'), manifests this characteristic of deflection.²⁰ The Imaginary body dominating the shifter 'I' will make use of the body tied to language in estranged, fascinating ways, ways that are characterised by meaning deflected onto the body, such as in *A Pagan Place* and its second-person narrative, as though a self exists alongside a body-self.

Assertions from the bodily 'I' shifter proceed by a rule of 'lure and rule', by which the feminine subject's own desire is deflected into the body, a body divided and 'sexualised' through erotic zones by which to lure the unitary masculine subject. The body, instead of the signifier, becomes the lure in a repetition with difference of 'divide and rule'.²¹ The position-as-child as part of its supposed innocence must deny desire and at the same time lure and rule the knowing 'master' whose own body remains 'undivided'.

Caithleen is thus on the cusp of two contradictory, and antagonistic, discourses - an absolute denial of infantile sexuality with its claim for the 'whole' unity of a child's body-signifier, and a vilification reserved for female sexuality simultaneous with an

¹⁹ Napier has labelled this a 'deflected autobiography' in fiction-making where

By the term 'deflected' is meant the practice among ... women ... of composing autobiographies in which they are perpetually present yet not apparently central, where their lives are articulated without their being identified as the heroine, or sometimes even protagonist, of their works. (Napier cited Hughes 2003: 34)

²⁰ Beckett's use of second-person narrative in *Company* (1980) is another such deflected narrative.

²¹ Gender is Imaginary, but sexuality is Symbolic. An Imaginary division of the body into many body parts which are then sexualised and eroticised (breasts, hair, legs etc) is a disingenuous Imaginary form of castration, one designed to avail castration anxiety proper in the masculine subject, whose body is not so divided - the presence of the penis is Imaginary proof of not being castrated. I use lower case 'lure' for the Imaginary-body form, versus the capitalised 'Lure' of the signifier.

encouragement of eroticised division in the female body-signifier - such as beginning to wear lipstick.

For the first secret meeting in town when they go to the cinema to see a romantic film ("a boy having to leave a girl to go off to war"), Caithleen wears lipstick but claims to Mr. Gentleman, "I wasn't thinking of kissing. I never kiss anyone", and this, of course, is an expert piece of flirting. (O'Brien 1988: 56, 54) On the way home, Mr. Gentleman's hand goes over to rest on Caithleen's lap and, "My hand was waiting for it. We locked out our fingers, and for the rest of the journey we drove like that, except going around sharp bends." (O'Brien 1988: 56)²² Caithleen is sexual already and enjoys flirting. She trusts Mr. Gentleman in the position of the father: "With his pale face, his beautiful, loveless eyes, and I thought of how I used to think he was God." (O'Brien 1988: 262)²³ O'Brien's writing has a wonderfully accurate, gentle, pathos and humour - Caithleen is truly innocent and has no idea of the future U-turns and "sharp bends" of romance.

Life will follow art, and the film's 'romance' will be repeated in kind at the finish of the novel, with Mr. Gentleman taking a sharp bend on the way to collect her. He acts as if he is nearly at war, such as his telegram mentioning "THREATS FROM YOUR FATHER", writing which resembles newspaper headlines of looming war. (O'Brien 1988: 175) War is the ultimate call to men, and "He always gave the impression he did not want to leave you, but that fate, or duty, or family forced him away." (O'Brien 1987: 262) A brotherhood of men, including Caithleen's father and Mr. Gentleman, is consolidated by the threat of 'war' between them. A capitalised war-call is the 'dead' voice of the position of the father calling to the two men, like gentlemen, to affirm their final allegiance to the father, as well as censure Caithleen's exclusion.²⁴ Mr. Gentleman's plea of "ENFORCED SILENCE" and "MUST NOT SEE YOU" is his disingenuous innocence, sounding and wishing to *appear constrained* like a child. The position of the father calls, and his gentlemanly loyalty is assured.

²² Hands were dangerous things, in cars especially - the Standing Committee of the Catholic hierarchy petitioned Carrigan for "legislation dealing with the moral abuse of motorcars." (Smith 2003: 217)

²³ "The more a man can believe a woman confuses him with God, in other words, what she enjoys, the less he hates, the less he is... and since, after all, there is no love without hate, the less he loves." (Lacan 1999b: 89)

²⁴ A state of war is the ultimate occasion of patriarchal brotherhood. "Brotherhood treats women, insofar as it acknowledges them, as its greatest threat, for women embody the mythology of betrayal. At best women offer absolute loyalty to 'their' man." (Benton 1995: 157) The logic is Caithleen has already betrayed her own father, therefore she will also in time betray Mr. Gentleman.

Another suggestive example of disingenuous innocence and narcissistic male melancholy occurs when Caithleen's four-year old son Cash writes out on the window of Caithleen's flat in London, what is his own version of Mr. Gentleman's war-telegram, "HELP". (O'Brien 1988: 483)²⁵ Patriarchy's masculine child chooses to parade a melancholy-martyr narcissism (writhing like Hamlet in Oedipal throes), awaiting the father to come and rescue the child and carry the child off towards the position of the father. Sleeping beauty's cry for 'help' is only a retroactive repetition and confirmation of the male child's cry for help, and the 'rescue of himself', in anticipation of the position of the father. "HELP" also signs the anxiety of an economic, social, and gender conservatism already developed in a cash-branded, four-year old boy, vis-à-vis his impoverished mother - the boy's writing on the window and looking away from his mother instantiates her inaugural denigration in the romance between the boy child and mother, after which Caithleen (now called Kate) ultimately begins to despair.²⁶

Caithleen repeatedly returns again to romance either with men or finally with her son. After Cash is born, Caithleen writes to Baba of mother and child:

We are in a valley with a hill of golden, trampled bracken to look out on... We have a gray stone house... there is something about having a child and being in a valley, and being loved, that is more marvellous...

(O'Brien 1988: 382, italics in original)

Yet Caithleen never manages to learn what divides her from either men or her son, through another "division that never bears its necessity within itself". (Rancière 2003: 177) Within the genre of romance the feminine subject is led to believe a 'bad' father (her own bad father, bad luck, the dragon, duty, difficult circumstance, war), is what divides the man from the woman, and comprises the obstacle to love. However, in romance, it is the women who is the obstacle to the man and the success of his romance with the position of

²⁵ The scene may well allude to Yeats's play, *The Words Upon the Window-Pane* (1930), and Mrs. Henderson's criticism of men: "Now they are old, now they are young. They change all in a moment as their thought changes. It is sometimes a terrible thing to be out of the body, God help us all." (Yeats 2001: 479) Cash, Mr. Gentleman, Eugene all refuse to join Caithleen with their body.

²⁶ Eugene is Cash's father, and we might expect the sign of a call for 'HELP' to be addressed to the father, but it is possible to carry the argument further. The coincidence of a boy called Cash in a flat with a mother in poverty signing 'Help' (as if he is at war), can be read as O'Brien's version of the political unconscious of the Mother and Child debacle. The Mother and Child debacle was a way for the Catholic hierarchy of showing an unavowable contempt of poor mothers. By preventing such mothers from having free health care for themselves and their young children, the children would necessarily wonder, where is the other who can save us? The answer is in the shape of the Catholic hierarchy and its heavenly Father, or else the pursuit of profit. Either way, Catholic paternalism and a capitalist economy are vouchsafed.

the father. The man shall seek the woman's "denigration as the precondition for the man's belief in his own soul". (Rose 1982: 48-9) The patriarchal masculine subject believes such denigration is the path to the position of the father, where a soul awaits him lying in state - the sleeping beauty of romance is not the beautiful girl, but the beautiful soul of the father.²⁷ The sleeping beauty is a metaphor for a father's soul. Filtered through patriarchy's property-biology transmission of legitimacy, the woman's womb is the Imaginary-body lure to the man for attaining the position of the father and hence a beautiful soul. This is how fertility functions as the Real, among men as well as women.

Romance then functions to repeat the exclusion of women from Law of the Father in the Law of Desire in the Symbolic, except in so far as a woman becomes a mother who can only be recognised or legitimated by a man - for instance, marriage in the Church.

Also, romance has its own intrinsic, political qualities - demanding a lack of speech in a semiotic exchange of looks, gestures and bodily lures,²⁸ and so a lack of symbolic articulation (repressing the signifier) - romance is a genre well adapted for a *body politic* where censorship is endemic.²⁹ Romance is thus a low form of sexuality (romance teases but is closed to the signifier except attached to the position of the father), a low form of innocence (disingenuously innocent in its deathless repetition of a quest for the position of the father), and the lowest form of politics (romance speaks of humility and love but requires the denigration and censorship of any desire except that coherent with the position of the father).

Yet there are still all kinds of hilarious winks at the structure of romantic discourse in O'Brien's fiction. A woman's Imaginary-body lure might turn out to be most fervent and funny, yet most profound prayer. At dinner with Mr. Gentleman, Caithleen pushes her plate "over to the edge of the table, where it would be handy for the waiter to get it." (O'Brien 1988: 55) This is 'good' behaviour, with Caithleen being helpful like the good child, but O'Brien is punning and sliding into the narrative Caithleen's unavowable desire

²⁷ Once Hamlet's attainment of the position of the father is removed by Claudius, Hamlet only then begins to obscenely denigrate Ophelia: "I could interpret between you and your love if I could see the puppets dallying... It would cost you a groaning to take off mine edge." (3.2.234-237) The masculine child in patriarchy believes attainment of the position of the father is via the denigration or death of the feminine, be it mother or lover, or both, and once more, Hamlet is the exceptionally good child.

²⁸ Discussed previously for May Laffan's novel, *Hogan M.P.*

²⁹ The entire Mother and Child 'scandal' was an exercise in censorship, to protect the economic interests of doctors in private practice. Censorship may go as far as to treat dissent or selected others as an infestation of the 'body politic', the fascist aesthetic.

for Mr. Gentleman to do the same, to pick her up and get 'it', meaning Caithleen's body. All Mr. Gentleman can do is see Caithleen from within a father-occluded Imaginary, and so it is, that Caithleen must lure him with her appearance. To mimic language, Caithleen uses body parts as though such 'objects' can comprise the semantic units of a sentence in her body language to communicate with another repressed signifier in the unconscious of Mr. Gentleman's father-occluded Imaginary.³⁰ The *grammar* of her desire becomes *visible* (the preference of an allegiance to the Imaginary), pushing the plate to the edge of the table for him to 'come' and get 'it'.³¹

Caithleen manually does what her unconscious desire cannot be allowed to *say* aloud in the presence of the 'good' father. Of course, the game is there to be played on both sides - *jouissance* is possible on both sides of the masquerade. For Mr. Gentleman there is *jouissance* at Caithleen's disingenuous disguise of desiring flesh - the prohibition in the Law of the Father over naked desire or the naked signifier appearing 'seems' intact, especially with Caithleen's childish behaviour at the dinner table - and yet the rule is being flouted by the Imaginary-signifier of her body language, communicating 'come and get it'.

Later, Mr. Gentleman asks Caithleen if she had been expelled from school, and Caithleen replies, "Yes, we wrote a bad thing". (O'Brien 1988: 157) The grammar creates a transition in his eyes from Caithleen as a woman to Caithleen as a young schoolgirl (a switch Caithleen would normally abhor). Caithleen blushes, but the shift in register is not so much a matter of coping with expected censure, but strategically managing an atmosphere, one which gives heart to Mr. Gentleman to advance more strongly, her bad grammar itself a lure begging his correction and prompting him to the position of the father where his *jouissance*, and Caithleen's desire for being picked up like a plate, reside.³²

There are other knowing jokes on food, desire, and signification. Thinking on Mr. Gentleman, Caithleen says to herself: "My soul was alive; enchantment; something I had never known before. It was the happiest day of my whole life." (O'Brien 1988: 56) Now punctuation takes part - the two semi-colons wrapped around 'enchantment' are a lovely pun on the enchantment of both love and digestion, on the pleasures of a *full* colon, a

³⁰ This division of body parts is comparable to the segmentation of Beckett's Worm - or the molarity of all human flesh, a molarity feared by the patriarchal, masculine subject, even as that subject is Imaginarily sexuated by it in the divided or segmented image of the other.

³¹ The method of communication is an Imaginary-metonymy, when a used plate stands in for Caithleen's 'dirty' body.

³² A similar mobility and semiotics were described for *Hogan M.P.*

comic sort of Platonic myth of a digestion halved and separated and brought together in true love. Food becomes a wonderful, comic metaphor for the obstacle delaying true love - all that is needed is to get through the food - the promise of a candlelit dinner.

On another occasion at dinner, food metaphors elicit this time a lack of desire and a hidden sadness.

He reminded me of the melon. Cool and cold and bloodless and refreshing. He twined his ankles around mine under the big linen tablecloth and the evening began to be perfect. (O'Brien 1988: 161-2)

The pun here is on a melon-choly sliding beneath Mr. Gentleman's melon-like appearance. To outwit the melancholy, Caithleen engages in a more seductive body language to manage and direct Mr. Gentleman's repressed desire. Mr. Gentleman soon has "caught [her] elbow", an elbow left out for the purpose by way of another lure, like the plate, only Mr. Gentleman is never gentle, playful and intelligent enough to see or hear the hint. (O'Brien 1988: 54) Next, Mr Gentleman's eyes "met mine for *as long as I wanted*." (O'Brien 1988: 55, italics mine) Mr. Gentleman had "a way of looking at me that made me feel innocent". (O'Brien 1988: 55) Caithleen is happiest gently guiding her excited pupil Mr. Gentleman, "no good for small talk", towards a desire in both their bodies. (O'Brien 1988: 55) However, the genre of romance is structured to dissipate desire in two mutually exclusive fashions, instead of one mutually inclusive manner. For the feminine subject, there are the endless, chiasmic displacements of language and body searching for the signifier, and for the masculine subject, there is the deathless postponement of the position of the father until its achievement in the denigration of the feminine other, ruining the romance in the end, but on his own terms.

The division between the two alternatives is perfectly set out, sitting in a car at the beach. Caithleen thinks,

though it was nice to sit there facing the sea, I thought of us as being somewhere else. In the woods, close together, beside a little stream. A secret place. (O'Brien 1988: 157)

However, soon Caithleen is accusing Mr. Gentleman of a similar sin, of slipping away, away from her.

We were quiet and strange. It was always like that with Mr. Gentleman. He slipped away, just when things were perfect, as if he couldn't endure perfection.
(O'Brien 1988: 158)

Caithleen's ideal of perfect romance is being together with a man on a mystic threshold of a signifier and love, whereas Mr. Gentleman cannot endure such a threshold, and finds it unendurable, always slipping away as at the elopement, into the capitalised flesh of the father, signing "ENFORCED SILENCE. MUST NOT SEE YOU." (O'Brien 1988: 175) His is a romantic Oedipal blindness which generically institutes *not seeing* the feminine as the culturally preferred, if unavowed, path to inscribing the soul of a father-occluded Imaginary on the masculine lover. In O'Brien's fiction, this *aphanasis* (or fading away of the subject, as in the car) as feminine *jouissance* (the disappearance of the subject of life and flesh into the subject of death and desire) is conducted in the hope of finding a signifier and a masculine beloved together. However, the masculine beloved generally betrays in the end a lovelessness to those in the position-as-child, and a love of the position of the father.

Yet her protagonists seem compelled to believe that there can be hope in this role. Perhaps it is the only role for them to play, and "to have any role is always something," as 'Sir' says in *Living Quarters* (Friel 1996: 180). The only role is thus a role to which the feminine must say 'yes', if there is only a 'yes' and a 'no' in the binary divided, dyad-structured, father-occluded Imaginary (whose position of the father is the only legally allowable sexual position for the man). Finding sexuality must still be tried in this denuded Symbolic of a father-occluded Imaginary. Women must say yes to the man in the father position because that is the only culturally valid position in patriarchy from where the man can 'get off', and obtain phallic *jouissance*. To avoid utter loneliness, there seems only 'yes'. There would seem to be no choice left to women, no matter if failure is repeated, and this is the danger of romance as it seeks to move the private into the public, as if that is enough to change the structure of desire, or even justice.

The politics of a compelling positivity addressed to an Irish position of the father should include the historical context of the independence struggle and civil war, all of which meant a militarization of Irish society and its social networks - Friel's character named 'Sir'

would thus be an exemplary, generic character supplying such disingenuous wisdom as to suggest there is no choice but one choice.³³

In the period following the violence of the revolutionary period and civil war, and when such aggressive laws controlling censorship and the social mobility of women were being legislated in Ireland, it is highly suggestive how *Fianna Fáil* was about to become the dominant party of the 1930s to 50s, a name meaning 'Soldiers of Destiny'. Women and children in the position-as-child are now to follow rules-sacraments-orders they have neither written nor may adjudicate on (such as on juries), but which they are subjected to in order for their flesh to be affirmed in the Law of the Father (a necessity for any social recognition).

This affirmation process is not sexual except in so far as a woman appears female, and a man appears male, and in fact such a dominant affirmation process mitigates against sexuality (sexuality is in the Symbolic). There are also consequences for gender and agency. Mave O'Shaughnessy in *Going to Maynooth* and Molly Bloom in *Ulysses*, as much as they might appear opposite, are one in this -- both have the regiment of soldiers in their versions of 'Yes'. Both are entranced 'privates' in love most of all with Catholic or British soldiers, either priests or lieutenants.³⁴ The yes as the 'yessential' of a subject's existence is the phallic *jouissance* of a soldier, and the affirmation of a soldier to an officer is the only collectivism women in patriarchy are legitimately allowed.³⁵ Such regimented affirmation occludes a voluntary mindlessness, or the failure to speak and discriminate, conducted for fear of reprisal. This lack of a 'no' is a lack of discrimination for fear to "expose the expressive insecurities of Irish masculinity." (Carruthers 2005: 115) The same is especially true of women on juries.

³³ I take this up in the next chapter on Friel. The no-choice is a variation on the 'the father-or-worse', but now held up to maintain the masculine gender (an Imaginary construct) as the only possible version of the father (a Symbolic construct). The argument could be extended to any militarised society, where women are not permitted to fight, such as colonial cultures.

³⁴ "I hate the mention of politics after the war that Pretoria and Ladysmith and Bloemfontein where Gardner Lieutenant Stanley G 8th Bn 2nd East Lancs Rgt of enteric fever he was a lovely fellow in khaki and just the right height over me..." (*Ulysses* 18. 388-391) Effectively collating the body as shifter, as Joyce does with promiscuous Molly's dereliction of grammar, is another manner of saying all desire belongs to Joyce's Imaginary.

³⁵ As discussed earlier, this affirmation may still have a particular pleasure - "orthodoxy is the highest subversion; serving the Law is the highest adventure." (Žižek 2003: 56) Women as mothers must then gamble on achieving complete orthodoxy to achieve such pleasure - the perfect family - and hence can only *redouble her efforts* to support the structure of patriarchy. The gamble, and it is a gamble, does not often pay, in O'Brien's fiction.

After the traumas of the nationalist struggle and civil war, the Irish Constitution could be compared with a military *collage* in the unconscious of Irish subjects. This collage in the unconscious was particularly disciplined in the case of women, with an even more ferocious discipline than men.³⁶ The *collage* could become a college in the conscious of men when men have access to the Law, though a college famously lax of discipline with insecure, irresponsible men marching out drunk (Caithleen's father) or slipping away, AWOL (Mr. Gentleman). While the war of independence was won and men demobbed to enjoy the spoils, women (who also fought, a fact occluded in most Irish history),³⁷ were definitively 'demobilised' in the role of mother. Motherhood was the de-mobilisation offered to women. Women who refused the role and kept on 'fighting' for 'feminist' freedoms became a threat to patriarchal, Catholic hegemony over the State. Women who continued the struggle with 'yes' addressed to their own bodies, or independence from motherhood, were labelled 'scandalous women'.

This politics of fear informed by a politics of lovelessness only holding out the promises of romance raises the question of agency. Such an unavowable and mandatory 'yes' raises the issue in Spivak's question, *Can the Subaltern Speak?* (1988)

If the only 'valid' relation is to be *seen* through the Imaginary medium of the genre of romance and its engagement to the position of the father, and finally meeting with denigration, the answer would seem to be no. For a woman to have literally to divide herself into a mother and child, "a division that never bears its necessity within itself", is always to maintain the position of the father atop the hierarchy of good, at the expense of not only her own speech, but the father's speech. (Rancière 2003: 177) There, the father speaks to the fertile subaltern in dead, Imaginary speech - the father draws away from the *infertile*, empty perfection of the signifier - and speech and difference are always moot, being qualitatively unable to trouble the male gender's coup over the position of the

³⁶ Such as Binder and Bender at the start of Marina Carr's *Low in the Dark* (1990). Curtains refuses to wear the 'uniform' of women (next chapter).

³⁷ In the basement of Kilmainham Gaol the female republican prisoners cooked the food. More generally, Maud Gonne was the 'exception' who was left in most history books, whereas Anne Devlin, Elizabeth O'Farrell, and Maggie O'Toole and their ilk were forgotten, a situation now being somewhat addressed. See for instance, <http://www.independent.ie/national-news/forgotten-1916-women-rising-up-thanks-to-artist-francis-107980.html> [accessed 21st August 2007].

father.³⁸ The patriarch is an ego with a legal case and little need to defend himself, on the cultural basis of over-promoted fathers in romance.³⁹

What I would argue is how in a society riveted by the genre of romance, nationalism and love affairs are public and private reifications of the other, bound over to Imaginary dead speech justifying a nationalist-patriarchal / masculine lover. The denigration of the feminised nation (Mother Ireland) by the coloniser is used by the nationalist-patriarch to supply the coherence required by nationalism, and create a band of brothers (and this may include women at the time, who represent Mother Ireland in the flesh, such as Maud Gonne). However, the colonial denigration of the feminised nation is repeated in private by the ascension of nationalist-patriarchy. In fact, the denigration of the women by the nationalist male may be *necessary* only so as to repeat and control, with success this time, the trauma of colonialism on the masculine body and superego. The structures of the colonial rule are imbibed into the native population by the very genre which structures resistance to the coloniser. One is a reification of the other.

The Country Girls has been indeed written by O'Brien part as political allegory - with Kate as a modern version of Caithleen / old Ireland - and Caithleen's father and Mr. Gentleman do illuminate Ireland's unfortunate choice of champions. Mr. Brady is a squall of drunken, violent self-pity, and in the trickle-down, father-occluded Imaginary of patriarchy, he newly personifies the self-indulgence and violence of the Ascendancy landlord class, now writ in Catholic flesh. The local priest finds an easy accommodation with him and excuses his violent alcoholism, "Every man takes a drink. It's the climate", an accommodation made before in the political climate of 1795, at the founding of Maynooth seminary. (O'Brien 1987: 271) The French ancestry of Mr. Gentleman and his failure to turn up at the 'revolutionary' runaway with Caithleen has obvious resonances with 1798. French hopes and failures trained into Caithleen's (and O'Brien's) heart in the classroom from "daily inculcations of history" are reprised in Mr. Gentleman. (*Mother Ireland*; O'Brien 1999: 55) The same "grinding themes" of history - "victimisation, misapprehension, aborted revolutions, informers, chaos and bungle", illuminate Caithleen's romance with Mr. Gentleman. (O'Brien 1999: 61) Mr. Gentleman is a French-named coquette, full of

³⁸ This discussion is taken up in Chapter 8, for Carr's play, *Low in the Dark* (1990), where liberated 'transsexual' men would rather *be seen* to be women, rather than *speak as* women (still preferring Imaginary being when it occludes lack in the Symbolic). Men act as if representing women by being seen as women will make them innocent.

³⁹ Such as how Caithleen's father feels little need to defend himself - an instance of the *petit*, primordial father.

romantic promises, but promises not made of iron, and O'Brien hilariously has Mr. Gentleman say of himself, with Caithleen and himself undressed, "Darling, I'm not made of iron". (O'Brien 1988: 165) The promise of the French phallus is unworthy of Ireland, and O'Brien is ready, unfailingly, to laugh at history and romance, as well as mourn.

This transference between the public and private spheres is entirely derivative of a literary romance tradition, but first the split must be grounded in literary discourse, and in English, this split is best exemplified by Milton in *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso* (both 1645).

First of all, in a comparison between *The Country Girls* and Milton's poem, there is how *L'Allegro* (1645) speaks of "linkéd sweetness long drawn out", (l. 140), and then *Il Penseroso* (1645) dreams,

Of forests and enchantments drear,
Where more is meant than meets the ear. (l. 117-120)

Milton's lines are 'repeated' in their detail in the two most key, romantic scenes of *The Country Girls*, in the candlelit dinner, and then at the beach with Caithleen's dream of a forest. Romance as old as Milton is literally the "deathless song" in the ears of Caithleen and Mr. Gentleman. (O'Brien 1988: 57) Geoffrey Hartman has pointed to the key role *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso* in structuring the genre,

crucial landmarks in the purification of romance, the mind as magus
summoning its own moods and wandering, literally, at will.
(cited in Parker 1979: 163)

Medieval romance created gendered private and public spheres with fair maidens unhappily trapped in private awaiting rescue, and knights cheerfully wandering at will in public on his way to rescue.

This wandering at will would serve very well the practice of colonialism, but first comes a perverse, bourgeois twisting of medieval romance. In the trickled-down Imaginary of colonial romance coming after Milton, women are meant to become the buoyant but perversely domestic and private-bound 'gender' of *L'Allegro*, and men the melancholic but perversely public-bound 'gender' of *Il Penseroso*. An example is the way Caithleen's desperately unhappy mother makes flowers out of stalks of pampas grass, "covered with pieces of silver paper and gold paper", trying to be buoyant, while her husband cavorts

drunk around the country at will, making the 'melancholic' complaint that everyone is "wiping his eye" (stealing from him). (O'Brien 1988: 26, 117)⁴⁰

The perverse imposition was critical since the colonial masculine subject was to be the subject who would treat the world as a forest, and wander, literally, at will, but who must hide his pleasure, carrying out the duty of the stern parent over an infantilised native culture. Hartmann considers how in Milton's two poems,

extremes of mirth and melancholy, and even of divinity itself, are exorcised...
Milton's romantic machinery is grounded in the reasonableness of a specific
national temperament. (Hartmann 1970: 287)

The reasonableness of the intrepid, enlightened colonist, far away from his own ground, from his own land, was re-grounded in colonial romance. The genre of colonial romance supplied male detachment from loved ones with the 'correct' form of melancholy, a melancholy invested in the colonial position of the father. The patriarchal colonial lover in the dangerous environment of the 'forest' or native land, faced with extremes of animal and spirit-divinity among native cultures, still insists on wandering at will in the 'public' sphere of the native's land, grounded in the fact his beloved is buoyantly watching over the 'private' domestic sphere in the colonial mother-land.

Though that environment remains demonic, the magus is clearly in control: the most formal sign of control is, in fact, the conceit governing his invitations, which reverses the oldest religious formula known to us, the *do ut des* - I give, so that you give. In *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso* the poet is not petitioning but propositioning his goddess: you give me these pleasures, and I will be yours. He lays down his conditions and enjoys them in advance.

(Hartmann 1970: 287-288)

Everything is here to be developed by colonialism - the romantic lover's conceit, 'come to me, give your trust, and be happy', becomes then the colonial conceit, 'come to me, give your trust, and be happy and enlightened'. The beloved / native comes not offering lures or land out of disinterest, but in expectation of the lover's / colonialist's promise, which was share with me some new pleasures of your body and land, and I will be yours. This promise is a promise the lover / colonialist *always* defaults on, by an unavowable, determined worship of the position of the father determined by his gender and colonial culture. The coloniser *is* physically a child at first by his absolute need of shelter and food,

⁴⁰ The women dancing in Friel's *Dancing at Lughnasa* are an example.

but all the time this is disingenuous - his devotion is to his father, and not the 'native' mother culture-land which first supports him.

Such is the disingenuousness of the patriarchal position of the father, and the disingenuous nature of the position-as-child is its following, narcissistic accompaniment and legacy.⁴¹ All that meets the ear of the patriarchal position of the father and position-as-child is a romanticised voice of his own father. The compelling positivity of women is the only response to the unavowed negativity of a masculine subject, singularly 'looking forward' to the position of the father, at the neglect of every potential other position.

In patriarchy, the Law is unavailable to women except as they function as mothers and normalise the position of the father. What is a complementary discourse to the Law of the Father, romance, at once promises women access to desire and the Symbolic, but then denigrates the beloved, in broken promises of innocence and sexual fulfilment. The politics of romance serve not only censorship but supplement a colonial discourse. Nationalism, so far as it is romantic, repeats colonialism's denigration of a feminine beloved nation so as to control and master that denigration through its own private relations.

The 'problem' for women writers then is how to resist this massive cultural edifice of romance without enduring solitude or supplementing with suffering the dominant 'sexual' relation (so-called female 'masochism'). The 'scandalous' writing or images of scandalous women are one response. Mullin discusses how contemporary deployments or reassessments of 'scandalous' *Sile na Gig* images may

be too easily dismissed as primitive, amusing, or quaint; yet it clarifies the broader struggle to construct a form of historical consciousness in which Irish feminism can exist. The importance, and difficulty, of that struggle should not be underestimated. (Mullin 1991: 48)

The struggle may be clearer, but the difficulty should not be underestimated - look to how deathless the genre of romance has been in literature, nationalism, and indeed colonialism.⁴²

⁴¹ A similar situation discussed in Chapter 1, for William Carleton's story, *The Black Doctor*, by the romance offered to an underclass by a middle class, and in Chapter 2, with May Laffan's *Hogan M.P.*, and bourgeois romance. Romance straddles and maintains both class and colonial imperatives of difference, in favourable terms to middle-class 'patriarchs'.

⁴² Men still need women to wait for them whenever they serve in wars and colonial enterprises abroad.

What needs emphasising is that if what fails in private is actually the structure underwriting the public sphere, then publicising the failures of a *feminine or feminist* private not only does not threaten the 'masculine' public sphere, but may actually guarantee and serve to renew the same structure as well as same relations between private and public.

The problem of women being romantically attached to either man or nation, stretching and sacrificing herself to refresh and displace their silent, deathless staleness, can become an even more radical, subaltern participation in a "rainbow-chasing" version of romantic love or nationalism condemning women to a perpetual existence of 'woman-as-subaltern'. (Graham 2001: 102-127). Graham points to how when the

popular becomes the subaltern, it can also quickly become the 'authentic' and thus undergoes the same intellectual reading processes... its subalternity will become the seal for its indigeneity, its purity, fixing it forever as a fiction of movement. (Graham 2001: 126)

Bill Readings, at the chapter opening, points to the same limit. Publicising the private, romantic, feminist or subaltern text becomes elided into reading and recovering the romantic woman or subaltern with its pure origins fixed forever as a residual 'fiction of movement'. This fiction of movement is a fiction of mobility, reinforcing the 'Trap of father-occluded Imaginary whereby it *looks* as if social relations (and the Symbolic) have been 'moved' or invoked by a mobilisation of the private into the public, when the position of the father remains centripetally strong, arranged in a new, 'better', but stubbornly Imaginary position of the father.

Thus, the romantic feminist and subaltern may still be re-produced as the 'good child' along with a new 'good' father, after a suitable, liberating, 'scandal'. After gorging on scandal, liberalism (a modern, incremental form of revelation), reveals as it encounters what is new how 'all' is natural (liberalism being Nature minus scandal, from the paternal to the tabloid variety). A scandalous 'private' moves to a newly affirmed 'public'.

Romance then serves as a strategy of containment for adult, feminine resistance to patriarchy, and may not even contain a private, but only re-broadcast the public *as if it were private*.⁴³ Caithleen captures the connection before her melancholic end - "she

⁴³ Just as 'childhood' is a first strategy of containment for a child's resistance, and Hamlet is a strategy of containment for resistance to colonialism. How Romanticism can be associated with both romance and Hamlet is not coincidental to its colonial utility. In O'Brien's Trilogy, Baba is the one who is immune to the blandishments of romance, but finds it impossible to 'teach' Caithleen.

realized that her interest in people was generated solely by her needs". (O'Brien 1988: 498) Caithleen's 'public' is generated by Caithleen's private - there was little difference between private and public - one is a mirror of the other.

Even more important than this indifference, is the *intimate medium of trauma* always implied in any message crossing between the private and public. Consider the little girl playing with her jockey-doll. The content of the scene is 'private', and moves to the public in O'Brien's text, but was it anything other than public when the girl's own bodily constitution is framed by a public, superegoic gaze - and hence her shame.

Moreover, this 'public' content is then broadcast (as if it were private) back into the public, as if it meant trauma. This circularity of the 'public' being broadcast to the public as if it is private, and the broadcast being read as traumatic, is at the very heart of the problem. What is the function of this stylisation of trauma, except that romance serves as the structure of a father-occluded Imaginary whose limit function, filled as romance is with 'desire' and repressed passion (seeking romantic, public affirmation), is to serve as an 'Imaginary Unconscious' supplementing the position of the father. Romance is an Imaginary version of trauma, or the unconscious, devoted to the position of the father.

Thus, the question, "What is the relationship between conscious women and any history?" (Nuala O'Faolain cited Mullin 1991: 29), can have little answer other than 'none', whenever the feminine is made to cite the private and unconscious. How can the public, masculine subject of History recognise a 'private' feminine subject, and not coerce her into playing the historically invisible, private game of moving the plate to the edge of the table, or its public alternative, serving as the empty umbrella sign of the 'Mother Country'? In this cultural context, O'Brien has adapted her 'private' fiction to contemporary events of 'public', political importance, such as *Down by the River* (1996) and *In the Forest* (2002), novels which function as romantic-Constitutional interventions in Irish society and literature.

Fundamentally, the relation between private and public needs to be raised to a new condition of possibility. The position of the father is non-negotiable as the basis for social organisation - it is the father or worse. Access to the position of the father (public office, Law) may be incrementally increased, in terms of equal opportunity, but such access cannot address a debilitating split between the public and private which maintains a melancholic, public-oriented position of the father, and a buoyant, private-oriented, feminised position-as-child. The mobility between public and private has been Oedipalised

when that mobility need not be an Oedipal structure - the position of the father guaranteeing public order need not be the same father as the Oedipal father. The conflation enforces the Oedipal family as the model for the public sphere of the nation, as well as conflict between nations.⁴⁴

The movement between private and public needs re-imagining and re-articulating, and not within concepts of 'public scandal' or 'private therapy', 'public duty' and 'private love', concepts which maintain, through romance and romantic versions of colonialism *and* nationalism, a disingenuous mobility and patriarchy's actual *indifference* to 'public' and 'private' in the culture of a father-occluded Imaginary.⁴⁵

An ordered public is necessary, but as for privacy, privacy should not be considered as the alternative to the public, that is, the public's Imaginary, binary, partner. Privacy need not be constructed or open to development as an alternative to the public sphere:

It can, however, be maintained as a question, something that holds open the frictions that refuse to be functionalised by the systematics of global development, frictions such as gender difference, which are both marginal and central at the same time. (Readings 1995: 28)

There is already an example of Readings' openness discussed in this thesis, in the fight between Larry and Sheelah O'Toole in Carleton's *Phelim O'Toole's Courtship*, where especially the question of gender difference is marginal and central at the same time, and where I argued (in Chapter 1), the row assigns the pair a *conventional* gender difference.

After the row, Carleton writes how the pair go on, "as if nothing had occurred between them." (Carleton 2002b: 191) The remark reveals how the private is maintained as a question. Though conducted in 'private', and there is a vast amount of personal insult, the two walk away as if nothing has happened precisely because their insults have not touched

⁴⁴ There is the "family of nations" at the UN. Conflict may easily assume a totalising function, as if the loss of conflict means the extinction of the indivisible family and family name. The family metaphor demands a perspective and loyalty synchronous only with one, singular, father figure. See for instance, <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=11174&Cr=iraq&Cr1=> [accessed 28 September 2007].

⁴⁵ This is discussed further in Chapter 8. Such indifference takes on another form in Carr's *Low in the Dark* (1990). Instead of the petit primordial father as the romantic father, directing romantic love and mastering the feminine, now the petit primordial father will be the male transsexual, directing gender and mastering his own body. There will result a similar indifference to *jouissance*, and an ending in melancholy, just as *The Country Girls* ends in melancholy. Instead of romantic love being impossible, in Carr's play, gender will be impossible. Gender assumes the function of romantic love, an even more individualist pattern of identity with a concomitant loss of the possibilities of *jouissance*.

upon any private realm, but only the Imaginary realm of the body. The two can address their insults to the body of the other, and act as if nothing has happened, because the Imaginary body is not their site of privacy, as it is in the genre of romance (privacy and love lead invariably to undressing, behind the 'closed' bedroom door). In the romance genre, the row would not only be an indictment of a lack of love and respect for the other, but would have encompassed almost the whole of the private.

Larry and Sheelah have not found any zone of the private in the row - *nothing has gone on* - because the most important dimension of their marriage relation is the Symbolic. However, Larry and Sheelah actually do share this 'nothing' (or a signifier), which is proof of the private, but the reader cannot know what has gone on between them, except this Imaginary, conventional, assignation of gender. The reader who presumes after the row to know Larry and Sheelah knows *less than nothing*. The bourgeois Imaginary provision of the private is exactly why there is this indifference between the public and private, and why there is 'less than nothing' between a bourgeois private and bourgeois public.

Privacy and what is personal are actually so very rare in life.

What Larry and Sheelah have done is use the Imaginary to expend their frustration over their childlessness. The couple do not store their frustrations and their sense of privacy in the Imaginary, as in the genre of romance. For them, the Imaginary has its uses and utility, whereas in a father-occluded Imaginary, it is the Symbolic which has its uses and utility.⁴⁶ Thus, Larry and Sheelah can walk away as if nothing has happened - nothing, in the strong sense of the signifier, has actually happened - but the reader is not privy, except in a presumptuous Imaginary register of knowledge, which Carleton would be amused and dismayed by.

Chapter 1 finished by arguing the position of the child is more Symbolic in *Phelim O'Toole's Courtship*. Now it can be described more clearly how - the marriage relation is more Symbolic, and thus the child of Larry and Sheelah, Phelim, can and should be a child of the Symbolic.

All this is the reason 'carnavalesque' William Carleton has never had much recognition among a bourgeois culture primed to create and control *jouissance* in an Imaginary-bound private in a father-occluded Imaginary. Of course, Phelim's culture is still patriarchal, but it

⁴⁶ With potentially inhuman consequences, as Maire Jaanus has written of - see

is predominantly a culture which recognises, and listens for, the nothing of the signifier in the Symbolic. Baba at the end of *The Country Girls Trilogy* says how:

... there are some things in this world you cannot ask, and oh, Agnus Dei,
there are some things in this world you cannot answer.

(O'Brien 1988: 531)

This is more like the private, than Caithleen could understand.

What O'Brien brought lastingly together in *The Country Girls Trilogy* was Caithleen and Baba, and for all Baba's bullying of Caithleen, it was Baba who kept Caithleen sane, and there was love there between them, if Caithleen was seduced by romance into creating an exclusive 'private' between herself and her lover, to the exclusion of Baba. Yet, perhaps the most tender moment in the *Trilogy* happens as the two are on their way to Dublin by train, excited and full of the promise of life, looking for a smoking carriage, giving strangers the "So what" look. (O'Brien 1988: 121) The two feel different and look different to themselves, something intangible, new and exciting about their bodies and their minds, as well as a future which now includes smoking and drinking on trains. Baba turns to Caithleen:

"We'll have sherry or cider or some damn thing," she said, turning around her face to me. Her skin was dark, and when she smiled I thought of autumn things, like nuts and russet coloured apples.

"You're lovely looking," I said.

"You're gorgeous," she said in return.

"You're a picture," I said.

"You're like Rita Hayworth," she said.

(O'Brien 1988: 121)

Then next, "the train turned a sharp bend". (O'Brien 1988: 121) Trains, even in Ireland, do not take "sharp bends" - the reference is once more to those sharp bends of romance. The true romance of *The Country Girls Trilogy* is between Caithleen and Baba, if Caithleen never recognised Baba was her truest love.⁴⁷ The future had plenty of booze and fags and

⁴⁷ Kristine Byron writes how "the narrative structure of the epilogue suggests that the crucial theme is that of the Mother. Babe and Kate are synthesised via Baba's act of narrating". (Byron 2006: 28) However, as Baba's name might suggest, Baba is much more interested in the position of the child, like Yeats's *The Child in The Land of Heart's Desire*, than any notion of motherhood, or being mothered. Salis is more accurate, and the theme could be taken much further, when she considers a reading of O'Brien's play, *Iphigenia*, as a "reworking centred upon the theme of solitude." (Salis 2006: 139) Rather incredibly, in what purports to be a sympathetic and feminist reading, Shirley Peterson writes, "Baba lives a life devoid of love or hope, imprisoned by cynicism, bitterness, and loneliness", and describes the bond between Kate and Baba as "sadoomasochistic and debilitating". (Peterson 2006: 167)

men and far too many 'damn things', but on the train that was a moment in private and in public, a propos of nothing, but love.

Chapter 6 - Brian Friel

The plays of Brian Friel have attracted controversy centred on the status of language in the post-colonial situation, meaning for Ireland the aftermath of the plantation of English onto a Gaelic culture. With the growth of an anglicised state, the Irish could be recognised by the state only in what "knowledge made them express", but in the English language. (De Certeau 1997: 32) As Lee writes, "it would hardly be going too far to say that but for the loss of the [Irish] language, there would be little discussion about identity in the Republic." (Lee 1989: 662) The Janus-mouthed Irish were doubly "faced with the problem of their identity, as in every instance where language is no longer adequate to what it claims to state." (de Certeau 1997: 32) The use of language to 'state' personal meanings and emotions, and 'state', as in build the state, no longer resides in one language.

Friel's play *Translations* (1980) achieved fame for instigating a debate on the establishment of an English-based system of National Education and the ordination of an Anglicising map of Ireland in the 1830s. The two strategies marked the fullest attempt yet at convergence of language and English hegemony through the exigency of the English language prevailing in young minds and local maps. English was to be the sole medium of instruction in schools - the child as the imprimatur of planned hegemony. However, Irish people also heartened to opportunities the language could supply, such as Bridget in *Translations* welcoming the new schools -

You'll be taught to speak English and every subject will be taught *through*
English and everyone'll end up as cute as the Buncrana people.
(Friel 1996: 396, italics mine)

Friel here is describing how English as an (Imaginary) medium will become the glass the Irish see Ireland *through*, and not only in English place names, but for good and ill in a new economic and cultural regime. One voice shall intentionally begin not simply to displace, but to literally replace, another voice. The 'neutral' mapping exercise re-places Gaelic Ireland with an English Ireland. One voice institutionally replacing another voice is the black, basic art of colonialism.

Certainly, contemporary Ireland as a post-colonial society *is* the political context Friel acknowledges as crucial to his drama. (Kiberd 1996: 624) Kiberd carefully qualifies Friel's awareness of the post-colonial context. Friel, Kiberd says, is

well aware that his play is a post-colonial text to precisely the extent that its powerful diagnosis of a traumatised Irish consciousness nonetheless adds to the glories of the English language. (Kiberd 1996: 624)

Seamus Deane argues that paradoxically, although Friel's theme is loss and failure in both linguistic and political terms, the

fact that the play has been written is itself an indication of the success of the imagination in dealing with everything that seems opposed to its survival... Language lost in this fashion is also language rediscovered in such a way that the sense of loss has been overcome. (Deane 1996: 22)

In a career spanning crisis and transformation in Irish society, Friel does illuminate the pressures of both conflict and conformity on Irish sensibilities, and if at all he does produce the English-spouting Irishman, "the Celting Celt," it is only to analyse the forces producing it. (Deane 1996: 12) Indeed, even under such pressure, Friel's self-proclaimed aim is to realise Deane's optimism,

Perhaps this is an artist's arrogance, but I feel that once the voice is found in literature, then it can move out and become part of the common currency. (cited Delaney 2000: 147)

Clearly now from Friel himself there is implicit the cultural loss of a voice, and an attempt to find another. Christopher Murray has written of loss as Friel's major theme (Murray 1997a: 38), and Deane deliberates over how the sense of loss in Friel's plays comes from the presence of "displaced voices". (Deane 1996: 18) Friel in interview has commented, "apart from Synge, all our dramatists have pitched their *voices* for English acceptance and *recognition*". (cited Grene 1999: 5, italics mine) Friel clearly is attendant on voice and gaze, and the fundamental drives for recognition, for himself as an artist, as well the voices created on his stage. However, these voices are all too ready to avoid reality because the violence upon which authority rests, disguised, has been roughly exposed in the colonial context. (Deane 1996: 18) I will be arguing in this chapter how the loss or displacement of the voice under colonialism, a becoming *infans* and being positioned as a child, is revealed by an anxious lawlessness, a lawlessness troubling identity into uncertainty, gesture into deflation, and love into impossibility. This lawlessness is the colonial, racist void which is the legacy of the native, and I shall describe it by a number of approaches: the void of uncertainty, the void of gesture and the stereotype (the Gothic), the void of love (cannibalism), and the void of seriality. Friel's triumph is not quite, as Deane writes, how loss has been overcome - a sense of deep loss continues - but the sense of shock has been handled, a violence has been dissipated, and there is a gentility, with which to start again.

The Colonial Void of Uncertainty

Friel's lawlessness is markedly different from the carnivalesque, criminal 'lawlessness' which fascinated Synge, or in contemporary Irish drama, Martin McDonagh. This time, lawlessness is the lack of a subject position concurrent with modernity's construction, as Bauman argues, of the subject as legislator.¹ Modernity's determination of the subject is one demanding knowledge-making activities which then legitimate the subject's multiple roles "as spokesmen and guardians of society as a whole, as carriers and practitioners of society's supreme values and destiny". (Bauman 1995: 227) Such roles are not, except in exceptional ('Hamlet') cases, available to the colonised subject, who cannot be recognised as a legislator (except the bound to fall, 'Hamlet' sort). Friel quite clearly is deeply involved in the trickle-down Imaginary version of Hamlet, and Deane has noted the preponderance of Hamlet-style plots submerged in Friel's work:

A closed community, a hidden story, a gifted outsider with an antic intelligence, a drastic revelation leading to violence - these are the recurrent elements in a Brian Friel play. (Deane 1985: 166)

Hamlet as the histrionic entry point into a father-occluded, colonial Imaginary is certainly relevant to Friel's drama, though his characters refuse to become Hamlet. Characters suffer, but refuse Hamlet's murderous, self-defeating, finally colonial appeal to a masterful other. The dilapidating effects of colonial-modernity are present, but there shall be a refusal to access the certainties of law, or phallic *jouissance*, through the violent, self-defeating model of Hamlet. Self-defeat is done differently, and this refusal, and it is an ethical refusal, is the basis of Friel's uncertainties, and post-colonial quality of subjectivity.

Velten-Mrowka places "uncertainty and its numerous implications" at the core of Friel's work, and quotes Friel in 1972 commenting on the "difficulty for an Irish writer of his generation to find his faith", including over terms such as 'Irishness', 'native' and 'foreign'. (cited Velten-Mrowka 2006: 158) The roles Friel consistently creates are not marked by legislative certainty, but uncertainty, including uncertainty over what constitutes Irish nationality.

For instance, the apogee of *Molly Sweeney* is a switch from certainty (of trying to provide excellent testimony), to uncertainty, and even a beginning passion for ignorance: "And

¹ Equally, modernity's preference for the subject as a *petit*, primordial father, as discussed in the Introduction for the father-occluded Imaginary: modernity's subject is a legal case.

why should I question it any more?" (Friel 1999: 509) If Molly is an allegory of Ireland, then allegory's intentional suspension of certainty pining for a fictional, redemptory future to make coherent a difficult past is ultimately violent and self-defeating, since the masterful vision proposed to her on both sides (by Frank Sweeney and Rice) contains a violence (symbolised by her operation), which can never be simply 'subtracted' from either her own history or Irish history. Language and violence, like blindness, cannot be simply subtracted at a stroke, even for some good purpose, without more violence, trauma and uncertainty. Equally, neither can infantilisation be subtracted from a colonised people.

Emigration is one classic answer to the dissolution of certainty, a response to the drained ontologies of Donegal. Seamus Deane considers how in many of Friel's dramas, "Home is the place of the deformed in spirit," and how many early plays coalesce around central figures "torn by the necessity of abandoning the Ireland which they love," to preserve their sense of integrity, rather than from economic or political pressures. (Deane 1996: 20, 13) The men especially assuage themselves by exile rather than endure life in Ireland, when "their ultimate perception is that fidelity to the native place is a lethal form of nostalgia, an emotion which must be overcome if they are, quite simply, to grow up." (Deane 1996: 13) Adult men especially lack the ability to temporise their emotions - they cannot understand, or answer to, the emotions quaking in their bodies - and so exile and emigration become an attempt to subtract enduring infancy from a colonised culture.

Frank Hardy in *Faith Healer* returns home to Ireland to abet his own death, while Gar O'Donnell in *Philadelphia* feels compelled to emigrate, without knowing exactly why. The endings are painful, and deeply ambiguous. Frank Hardy and Gar O'Donnell have a sense in themselves of goodness and service, yet they also have a claustrophobic fear of themselves. Frank Hardy's departure from Ireland and his monologues reveal a fear of the family and country he faces up to in the end with a return home, while Gar O'Donnell's split between Private Gar and Public Gar physically embodies, Jekyll-and-Hyde like, the extreme claustrophobic tension of a consciously split self. Frank Hardy's 'exilic' personality cannot abide his 'national' personality. Gar O'Donnell's private personality cannot abide his public personality. In these dramatic splits, there is neither space nor imagination for fears of the two men to be assimilated in either Ireland, or a stable ego - the crisis expresses itself as a crisis of containment - the two cannot avail the Imaginary power of the phallus to delimit a stable arrangement of inside and outside. Male bodies must leave Ireland (Frank Hardy), or voices must leave male bodies (Gar O'Donnell). The masculine voice

and body remain profoundly uncertain of the other. There is no 'logical' process of exile or emigration to readily resolve the uncertainties.

Especially in the monologues, characters must stand and speak from a position of solitude which then embodies an uncertainty grounded in the problematic of intersubjectivity. The monologue structures are most of all symptomatic of the immobility of court proceedings, the isolation of speakers bound to give testimony in a hostile environment till the evidence has been heard. Molly Sweeney as a child was encouraged to give her father, a judge, exactly such "excellent testimony". (Friel 1999: 457) As shown by his involvement in Field Day, a group allied to invoking "a state of crisis" in Irish culture and politics, Friel as a poet-playwright and legislator is deliberately one of a singular, uncertain kind. (Gauthier 2002: 365) The underlying issue of the subject as failed legislator is very strong - Friel's Ballybeg subject is under trial, perhaps even for refusing to legislate, for refusing to become like Hamlet whose last words are his judgement - and this failure and refusal to legislate are the traumatic forms of modernity in Friel's drama.

The Colonial Void of Gesture and the Stereotype, or the Gothic

The uncertainty Friel is fascinated by makes considerable demands of subtlety on actors. Richard Pine writes, almost in a defeatist manner, how, "all [Friel's] plays are problems... [because] of his stagecraft, the way he relishes the demands he places on his interpreters." (Pine 1990: 224) The demand then on actors is to provide gestures of lacking which communicate an existential uncertainty. The arbitrary power which retards gesture - Freud's 'discontents of civilisation' - lies with the colonial Law of the Father, and loss of gesture in Friel is associated with an inheritance of English as a language which killed off Gaelic. English literature for Friel is

the literature of a different race... the residue of [the British] presence will still be with us... This is an area that we have still to resolve, and that brings us back to the question of language for this is one of the big inheritances which we have received from the British... we must make English identifiably our own language.
(quoted Delancy 2000: 147)

The loss of a language is a trauma beyond the arbitrary violence of the Law of the Father, arbitrarily killing flesh, but an encounter with the Real which indicates the arbitrary function of language itself. A traumatic awareness of the arbitrariness of language is coterminous with a traumatic awareness of the arbitrariness of the body - the Imaginary of the flesh is also a matter of signification. With the loss of a language comes the

uncertainties of a loss of gesture in the body (the stereotype is one more immediate solution to the crisis). Only a mother language is learned with all its accompanying gestures; the coloniser's language is learned inside uncertain gestures.²

In *Living Quarters* (1978), a visionary, transformative politics of the gesture is imagined as a solution to these uncertainties. The character 'Sir' describes his dream of a healing gesture as the turning point of history;

as if in some tiny, forgotten detail buried here – a smile, a hesitation, a tentative gesture – if only it could be found and recalled – in it must lie the key to understanding of *all* that happened. (Friel 1996: 177, italics in original)

The failed search for historical and personal certainty has been compacted into a saving gesture. Any such gesture's intrinsically fictional quality is admitted with the pun on 'lie'. However, the direction of the gesture is definitively towards a primordial position of the father. Sir imagines the intensely ambivalent capitulation of "the people" to a singular authority figure:

the ultimate arbiter, the powerful and impartial referee, the final adjudicator, a kind of human Hansard who knows these tiny little details and interprets them accurately. And yet no sooner do they conceive me with my authority and my knowledge than they begin flirting with the idea of circumventing me, of foxing me, outwitting me. (Friel 1996: 178)

However, as Sir's arbitrary power is established everywhere, a people *everywhere* become fugitive (circumvent, flee, fox and outwit), and this 'everywhere' includes their own bodies and sexuality. For instance, Molly Sweeney undergoes a transformative alienation from her own body when she gains the arbitrary power of sight. The arbitrariness of sight is exactly why, "Learning to see is not like learning a new language. It's like learning language for the first time." (Diderot cited Friel 1999: 453) Molly Sweeney flees the arbitrary power of sight, with what is now not *the* body belonging to her, but *a* fugitive body belonging to her. This analogy of sight is with the introduction of the coloniser's language.

With the arbitrary introduction of the colonial Law of the Father, the body of the native, whose body is marked differently by the coloniser's racist discourse, must circumvent, flee, fox and outwit the colonial Law, *even if the native consciously intends to obey the law*.

² Oscar Wilde parodied and inverted the process again. In Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest* (1895), items such as cucumber sandwiches are raised beyond reason to the height of a grotesque civility. "Please don't touch the cucumber sandwiches. They are ordered specially for Aunt Augusta." (Wilde 1999: 359)

Until the native has acquired the bodily gestures of the coloniser, until the pedagogical infantilisation of the native is successful (violently placing 'colonial' flesh, knowledge, ontology on a native signifier), the native is still highly visible in his own flesh, even to himself (the native problematically is not *tabula rasa*).

Worse, not only does the native begin to see the native land and native others through the English language, but an English language-gaze sees through native flesh, and 'shows' not only the native's racial profile and flesh, but desire. The colonial Law of the Father works progressively in time to blunt and occlude native desire by making a native set of gestures flee - the heart of colonial, racist darkness - until the native unconscious and signifier is colonised, though this takes undecidably longer. Colonialism makes fugitives until the native relinquishes the power of gesture at an older, bodily, unconscious solidarity with the native language, or until all desire in the native language is deflected through the colonial language. Colonialism looks on in anger at native *jouissance* (including sexuality), framing and draining native *jouissance* through colonial discourses on infantile sexuality and Romantic nostalgia.

If the classic 'nostalgic' gesture of colonialism at native culture is a colonial fantasy, there was a native culture and language which included the Real and rituals of the body. Nostalgia *does* reflect a loss in the Real. This loss, and trauma, the coloniser seeks control over, on colonial terms, and Hamlet is the fantasy framing of native desire preferred by the coloniser.

A double bind ensues - the native remains fugitive both to the racist, colonial Law of the Father and the native signifier, precisely as he consciously intends to obey the colonial law. If he does not obey, there is colonial reprisal, and if he does obey, there is the double bind of this profound alienation, or uncertainty.

Fugitives from colonial racism are demanded of the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. Lacan's answer to what is truth runs counter to a response limited to any rational version of the Symbolic. "What is sought - especially in legal testimony - is that on the basis of which one can judge his *jouissance*." (Lacan 1999b: 93)

Yet there is a difficulty when what is required by the law, the truth of the subject's own *jouissance*, may be by its nature 'unavowable' - the truth sought is the one that is "unavowable with respect to the law that regulates *jouissance*". (Lacan 1999b: 93) This

unknowability or impasse is crossed with the *arbitrary*, violent imposition of colonial Law and voice barring the *jouissance* of the native's Law and voice. Such violence crosses the Real and marks the colonial "basis of an impasse of formalisation," asserting colonial Law. (Lacan 1999b: 93) This means there is no logical basis which exists to traverse the path through the Real, for the native to walk towards the colonial Law and become a colonial legislator. There is no logical basis for transforming the native voice into the colonial voice. The stereotype is only one, illogical 'logic' to the crossing, a fuzzy, unreal object in the colonial gaze. As well, there is no logical basis for a stereotype and stereotypical gestures to even reach 'the Real' of particularity, or authentic individuality, much less become a legislator.

Such particularity, either of being addressed and named by Law, or of identifying oneself as unique, is granted only by *jouissance*, and *jouissance* is always *jouissance* of the body. The body is foundational to Law, Law being its retrospective confirmation (placing flesh on the signifier), and while the body has a unique being, it must be affirmed retrospectively in the Law. After the imposition of the colonial language, the fugitive native can no longer affirm himself in his own particularity, and this means he can no longer demand the truth of himself - *jouissance* has been drained off - and this is why Molly Sweeney becomes distraught, looking into the mirror in the dark, having lost her ability to demand her own truth.

As a hybrid between the native and Hamlet, there is the stereotype, with its skewed position in the network of power relations. The stereotype is either a transparent subject, defined and excluded and hence child-like, or a disguised subject veiled in the stereotype, deflecting his own body and desire into the stereotype for a ruse (Hamlet does all this).³ This latter manoeuvre holds special danger for two reasons.

³ Homi Bhabha's rendition of the stereotype is more complex still and yet positive, and Bhabha even draws comparison with the fetish. "The fetish or stereotype gives access to an 'identity' which is predicated as much on mastery and pleasure as it is on anxiety and defence, for it is a form of multiple and contradictory belief in its recognition of pleasure and disavowal of it." (Bhabha 1994: 107) I cannot altogether disagree, for the coloniser arrives in his own stereotypes, of having all authority. This can mean either having all responsibility (the progressive colonialism), or no responsibility (the savage colonialist) - both outcomes are permitted. The native fugitive / stereotype might also preserve and veil a native *jouissance* between the gaps of enunciation in English, by a covert Imaginary and imagination. None of this is discounted, though with Friel I would suggest that instead of Bhabha's ambivalence, there is more like a debilitating uncertainty. Goldsmith wrote "he had never laughed so much at Garrick's acting as at somebody in an Irish tavern mimicking a Quaker sermon." (cited in Yeats 2001: 710) Such a scene is more like Bhabha's conception of the stereotype as the "primary point of subjectification in colonial discourse, for both coloniser and colonised". (Bhabha 1994: 107) However, that comic and critical distance is not possible in Friel's Donegal, or a world

The first is the lack of responsibility, compounding a lack of access to the Law. In *Living Quarters*, being a stereotype allows Uncle Tom, a priest, to have a special insight into his congregation. However, being a stereotype allows Uncle Tom "to be witness to their pain but absolves him from experiencing it; appoints him confidant but acquits him of the responsibility of conscience" (Friel 1996: 180). Pain is witnessed with immunity to pain (the stereotype deflects pain as well as desire), and absolution comes without guilt (another form of lawlessness, since responsibility is not taken).

Being absolved of pain and responsibility are two hallmarks of how Frank Hardy and Frank Sweeney treat Grace and Molly. The two men in *Molly Sweeney* literally fight over control of Molly like a cat and dog. Frank and Rice are each a disingenuous act of anxious, narcissistic charity. Frank Sweeney and Rice seem helpful, but are utterly irresponsible, with Rice abandoning Molly to drown his sorrow and self-pity in the absolution of alcohol, and Frank Sweeney leaving for Ethiopia for the absolution of doing famine relief work.

Charitable help is a form of love indemnified of pain and responsibility, the blindsighted variety of love where the 'lover' cannot see the beloved, but only the lover's help to the other. Rice already failed this way with his first wife, and has not learned. Such gestures of charity and help cover over their inability to love. Those who refuse responsibility cannot love. Confidential, private matters are divulged to the two men, but their involvement with Molly Sweeney is not honour bound - rather the stereotype can tout his irresponsibility - the two are even a working-class and bourgeois form of the 'treacherous' Irish.⁴

already made out of ophthalmology lectures, as the world of Rice in *Molly Sweeney*. In Chapter 3, I lauded acting for its freedom and access to the position of the child, but the freedom of the inherited stereotype, especially a vetted stereotype such as a doctor, has never had its freedom in a stage but only deferred in a court, either the court of modern progress or professionalisation. Bhabha's stereotype is more close to the black slave performing in the scopic regime of the coloniser. Bhabha refers to the possibility of blackness in the scopic drive having "the pleasure value of darkness [in] a withdrawal in order to know nothing of the external world." (Bhabha 1994: 117) If the stereotype can have mastery, mastery is not the Law, and if the English language is 'scopic' in its racist, father-occluded Imaginary, language is still not scopic. Therefore, any such withdrawal in white Irish skin and among English-speaking Irish subjects is hugely problematic, even though the Irish subject and voice met with racism. A double bind ensues - the Irish subject cannot withdraw from racism and English because he cannot withdraw from being of the same colour and the Anglicisation of Ireland. Though racism is still a problem for the Irish, withdrawal is problematic even. Therefore a counter-veiling *jouissance* is all the harder to secure in Irish skin. Friel's pathos is without doubt Friel's own imagined version of a native *jouissance*, its heartfelt, gentle search for empathy, a gentle self-reflexivity not in search of mastery.

⁴ The Catholic Church similarly also touted an irresponsibility for priests who have sexually abused children. The entire edifice of Irish Catholicism might even be an native stereotype, given over to giving authority and responsibility to a colonial-priest caste.

The stereotype embodies an estranged, legal construction for surviving in a community while 'being' outside a community. The stereotype fundamentally lives anxiously inside a language of gesture and speech as a person whose body is outside the same language of gesture and speech. The stereotype acts and can share a life without *jouissance*, be he priest, friend, or lover – but “to have any role is always something,” as Sir says in *Living Quarters* (Friel 1996: 180). The stereotype is at least a role, but without responsibility there is no access to the law, or *jouissance*.

The second danger is how mimicry's feminine *jouissance*, or the imitation of another body in one's own body, may produce an inertia. In a society barring the native's own forms of *jouissance* (faction fighting, patterns), *jouissance* is scarce for the native. Frank Hardy and Frank Sweeney have inhabited a stereotype for so long as to appear to themselves as simple and grotesque. Frank Hardy and Frank Sweeney are 'franked' by an inherited Imaginary (and the Imaginary implies gestures) which haunts them, one which is never quite their own (lacking *jouissance*). Their desire is not their own desire - a condition true for any subject - but even their bodies and gestures are not their own bodies (as Molly Sweeney proved her body was her own, in her crazed dance, which shocks Frank).

This quality of not owning one's own body, or possession, is a Gothic trope, and the Gothic did grow alongside colonialism. The lawlessness and uncertainty of Friel's stage, the displaced voices, are all Gothic tropes - Hamlet, who also hears a displaced voice, is the preferred path away from colonialism's ghostly voices, going toward colonialism. This form of alienation has Frank Hardy and Frank Sweeney flee from Ireland, into Scotland, Wales, or Ethiopia, places with ongoing colonial and neo-colonial projects, either from English or Cold War / neo-colonial legacies.⁵

For Friel, the colonial legacy and its imposition of language is a Gothic presence in Irish life: "the residue of [the British] presence will still be with us... one of the big inheritances which we have received". (quoted Delaney 2000: 147) The country of Ireland ruled in English has struggled to assimilate its own Irish subjects.

The destructive inertia and pain for the masculine subject of a long-term masquerade is the root of this (franked) femininity, and perhaps is even what appeals to Grace and Molly. But the patriarchal masculine subject of a father-occluded Imaginary (and the native inherits a colonial father-occluded Imaginary) who would use the name-of-the-father as a phallus is

⁵ For Ethiopia, its strategic proximity to the sea approaches to the oil-rich, Arabian peninsula

conditioned to conflate appearance with reality. A stereotype may then still take over the masculine subject's body, even if this body is not their own original. A crisis of authenticity flows from the inauthenticity of the colonised body, in turn to generate a culture flowing with tropes of inauthenticity. To repeat, male bodies must either leave Ireland (the condition of the exile or emigrant), to escape this 'Gothic' process, or voices must leave male bodies (the condition of the stereotype), generating inauthenticity, and the Gothic crucially is a genre flowing with inauthenticity, particularly over questions of inheritance, and land ownership. Friel is correct to draw attention to the Gothic influence of a colonial inheritance.

The two paths of exile and emigration or superfluity (see Figure 4) are overdetermined in the colonial situation, but the paths retain a post-colonial momentum when either body or the voice, and always one, still remains superfluous. In Ireland, this had two diverging results. After independence, emigration climbed, while at the same time, reactionary Catholicism sought to seal the rift of cultural inauthenticity.

Hence, perhaps, Friel's turn to Russian drama.⁶ There is a potential parallel between Irish and Russian society in the growth of two traditions, one neo-conservative and the other nihilist, such as the contrast between Arkady and Basarov in *Fathers and Sons* (1987), or between his father and Gar O'Donnell in *Philadelphia*. Gar's splitting of personality and then his confused but angry need to emigrate expresses a latent nihilism at a personal as well as public, national level. The openly split Jekyll-and-Hyde self is yet another Gothic element - it may even be possible to consider Friel as a displaced nineteenth-century writer, returning to the repressed voices of Ireland of nineteenth-century Ireland.

The Colonial Void of Love

Friel's character's wish not only to escape a trial of themselves they themselves conduct, but because their finding the Law could return together a body and voice, and make love possible. Love certainly is an important theme to Friel. (Evans and Hill 2002: 481) Without

⁶ Also, *Three Sisters* (Chekhov adaptation, 1981), *A Month in the Country* (Turgenev adaptation, 1992), *Uncle Vanya* (Chekhov adaptation, 1998), *The Yalta Game* (Chekhov adaptation, 2001), *The Bear* (Chekhov adaptation, 2002). The historical context of Russia - enclosure (including land enclosure) in a new system of order (system being the solution to uncertainty, such as modernity or communism) rendering even the apex of society superfluous, if privileged - serves as a parallel with Irish problems and possibilities. In Ireland since independence a nihilist-nationalist tradition of martyrdom has existed uneasily beside neo-conservative government, and a nihilist perspective (part spurring emigration) became increasingly visible as the neo-conservative veered toward kitsch as a final way of avoiding narrating history and justifying its privileges, instead now, presenting history as a kitsch commodity.

access to the Law, by not being able to combine together an Imaginary flesh and Symbolic signifier, and so cross the Real of love, there comes lovelessness, and most of all a conjoined lawlessness and lovelessness is what marks the condition of the post-colonial. Whereas O'Brien's female characters searched for love through romance, Friel's male characters search to halt the trial process within themselves, if the hope for love is the same. In *Race Matters*, Cornel West writes,

A love ethic has nothing to do with sentimental feelings or tribal consciousness. Rather it is a last attempt at generating a sense of agency among a downtrodden people. (West 1993: 29)

The search for love is another sign of the loss. Another question Friel's post-colonialism faces up to - Grace Hardy and Molly Sweeney are prime examples - is how love might be found, and is difficult to find, among wounded men, including between fathers and sons.

Concerning *Philadelphia*, Friel has said the play, more than exile, is focused on

a boy belatedly becoming a man; a relationship between a father and son not coming to fruition; and a love affair that never flowered simply because of incoherence or shyness or whatever. (Delaney 2000: 61)

Greene comments, "Though it may be lost, silenced or aborted, love haunts Friel's dramas as the image of unrealised but actual potential," and Greene notes the "absent presences" of love in Gar's life, unrealised in either his relationship with his father or Aunt Lizzie. (Greene 1999: 212, 213) One crucial reason for the sense of emotional poverty in Friel's characters is the fantastic and awful sense of how their speech in English supplies the other with a disingenuous sense of love. Even as love exceeds language and exists in the interstices of language, in the gaze and voice as objects outside 'reality', love is certain, and certainty does not belong with Friel's male characters.

[Love] does not care about reality but, without doubt, it is concerned with certainty. But if it does so, it is for the subject to say so. Love does not go without saying. (Wolf 1999)

Love needs the certainty of the beloved's affirmation in Law by the lover. However, the subject defined and excluded by the colonial language is positioned as a child. The voice from the position-as-child is derided as insecure and false - it is allotted no certainty except for the love of parents - and without access to the Law of the Father the subject cannot affirm the other in love. In colonialism, the native voice as love object is banished through

uncertainty (the treacherous 'native' lover is a colonial projection), and only the love of parents predominates, as in *Philadelphia*.

In response, the 'classic' romance characteristic of colonialism arises between a native girl and a colonial officer who can have access to the Law of the Father and can affirm the other. In *Translations*, Maire falling for Lieutenant Yolland follows this logic - a tentative search for love has begun again between Maire and the representative of an English Law of the Father, Lieutenant Yolland.

The couple begin to fall in love with simple gestures and listening to the other speak, watching the words form in the other's mouth, without any need for understanding. All that is necessary is recognition of the other's gestures and voice. To be able to affirm the feelings of the other by gesture and voice alone, when any emotion does literally have any name in the other's language, is the carnival side of the Beckettian grey. This is a joyous translation of the other's flesh and voice into signification.

Of course, the English and Irish voice as objects did experiment and 'play' with the other. Tim Gauthier, following on from Declan Kiberd's *Field Day* pamphlet, remarks how both Ireland and England became "an experimental laboratory" for the other, one which formed the basis of a tradition of Anglo-Irish comedy. (Gauthier 2002: 396) The comedy however took place on a stage with an unequal power setting, for instance, how Anglo- always leads Irish in the comedy of language. What might history have been if the encounter had been written Anglo+Irish, or Irish+Anglo? Love grows the Other, but the inequality in the encounter of Anglo and Irish even through love enabling the translation is exemplified by Maire and Yolland in Friel's *Translations*. Comic and touching as the lovers' language and gestural games are, their encounter is divided by "extreme lopsided structures of imaginative identification" produced from a set of power relations conditioning Maire's community to come to terms with the threat of an overwhelming military force. (Graeber 2006: 8) This force's systemic violence is visible and raised to the arbitrariness and autonomy of the Real by the bureaucratic imposition of English place names by a *military* force. If Yolland is "a soldier by accident", Captain Lancey's threat is not accidental: "we will proceed until a complete clearance is made of this entire section". (Friel: 1996: 440) The absence and metaphysics of Yolland's presence shall be sued by martial force, and how Lancey may now qualify and command control of an "entire section" is from the military use of a mapping and naming exercise ostensibly made for the benefit of the local community's "more equitable taxation" (Friel 1996: 406). Naming and commanding are not

accidentally linked in the imagination of a military force - maps have always been a 'dual-use' military and civilian technology. Overwhelming military power "means those relying on the fear of force are not obliged to engage in a lot of interpretive labour, and thus, generally speaking, do not." (Graeber 2006: 7) The choice of '-' over '+' is one signifier of this violence and power gap, a gap the love of Maire and Yolland would cross but inside a vertical, and not horizontal relation of power. The vertical formality and structural de-realisation of the native's possibilities reconstructs the native like a child with a need for recognition, versus recognition and affirmation to offer.

The native who is forced to imbibe the colonial language is disallowed free expression (native culture and the child are to be constrained and taught), and disallowed sexuality (the native Symbolic is repressed and the child has the Oedipal taboo). This instils the superfluousness of love, with only parental love as the model for love, and parental love, being based on the infant's initial needs is only disingenuous. Need can be categorised as disingenuous desire - need has none of the unlimited openness of desire. This has the great benefit of a circular logic benefiting the coloniser. The coloniser is installed in the position of the father with the mother set to normalise his desire, and access to the Law is through the colonial order. Therefore, either becoming a fugitive or becoming a child are default positions. This is the pathological dark side of the Beckettian grey, when any emotion only has a pathological name (criminal or immature), in the language of the coloniser, and this dark side of the grey is also always present, if invisible.⁷

Consider how in *Translations* the play combines Maire and Yolland falling in love, when the 'Irish' dialogue spoken on stage is enunciated in English – an English Imaginary has literally captured the Irish language without need of an English audience knowing Irish. The English Imaginary has its own universal translation, in its own fantasy, for articulating the body and gestures of the (racial) other into the English language. A Gaelic Imaginary *is* on the dark side, literally.⁸

⁷ Equally, the carnival side of the grey is love, while the dark side of the grey is hate.

⁸ An example of the 'invisible' co-mingling of love and hate across an English-native divide would be Bramble's love for Charlotte Stammers (Bramble tries to be a soldier on her behalf), and the hate offered to the 'native' flower girl in Carleton's *The Black Doctor*. The parallel dispensation of love and hate in the Imaginary has been split and reframed by colonialism into a English-love-and native-hate division. This is due to the colonial monopoly over the Law of the Father and its potential for the affirmation of love.

Translations for Roche offers onstage a drama "whereby the same language connotes two separate linguistic realities." (Roche 1995: 248) However, a darker critique would note how in colonial practice the incorporation of the native body and native language into colonial language was more real than reality itself - it is the un-representable Real when one Imaginary cannibalises another Imaginary.

The Colonial Voids of Love and Cannibalism

There is a comic, pathetic enactment of anxiety and disguised, cannibalistic violence between Frank Sweeney and Rice. Frank Sweeney resembles a daft dog, enthusiastically wagging his tail with his tongue hanging out, happiest digging out badgers. He constantly says things twice all the time, just as a dog barks "Woof! Woof!" For instance,

And if there is a chance, any chance, that she might be able to see, we must take it, mustn't we? How can we not take it? She has nothing to lose, has she? What has she to lose? Nothing! Nothing! (Friel 1999: 459)

Rice, the qualified eye surgeon, on the other hand, is a cat, one who "Fell on [his] feet again", like a cat with nine lives. (Friel 1999: 504) Rice the cat has better metaphorical eyesight than Frank the dog - Rice sees farther than Frank and, for instance, knows Molly may later have psychological problems. There is a terrible envy and fear between them. Naturally, cats and dogs will fight, and Frank has thoughts of castrating Rice the cat. Frank picks up and describes a knife as if he were blind, feeling the "long blade; then this sharp edge." (Friel 1999: 427) Next he asks, "What is this object? These are ears. This is a furry body. Those are paws. That is a long tail. Ah, a cat!" (Friel 1999: 427) Frank's fantasy is to skin Rice the cat and take his place, a supremely cannibalistic desire.⁹

Stereotypes are a technique for the native to cannibalise his own body - a (simple, grotesque, funny) method for (re)placing or translating native flesh into the Imaginary of another language. The stereotype cannibalises his own body in the Imaginary of the coloniser out of 'love' for the coloniser.¹⁰

There is a 'dark' process of translation taking place, lightening the native's flesh. Kearney also discusses translation as 'transition', and how "Friel is aware that one does not cross the

⁹ This is just the kind of fantasmatic violence Martin McDonagh turns into wild, comic drama.

¹⁰ Such as Art Fool in *Phelim O'Toole's Courtship*.

frontiers dividing cultures with ease or impunity." (Kearney 1988: 15)¹¹ *Molly Sweeney* is a play about the dark translation of blindness and happiness into sight and madness, then into darkness and ignorance. Sight cannibalises blindness, but the madness of cannibalism is introduced. Racism is the institutional discourse which turns dark into light, and Frank Sweeney and Rice have treated Molly like a negro woman (if however, Molly finally and triumphantly shakes off their punitive treatment and neglect of her).

The introduction of sight also introduces Molly to the reality of gender stereotyping, and a sighted Imaginary ready to cannibalise her blind Imaginary (a process of the Real, involving a terrible psychic uncertainty), and a sighted Imaginary which insists sexuality is Imaginary. Before, sexuality for Molly was Symbolic, such as the sexuality expressed by her crazed dancing before her operation, and also, this is hugely important, the sexuality of her "defiant *smile*, the *excessive enthusiasm*, some *reckless, dangerous proposal*" after the operation. (Friel 1999: 494, italics mine) This is Molly's own sexuality and *jouissance*, which will then be drained from her in the Imaginary she is forced to become part of - an excessive, reckless, and dangerous sexuality, racially ascribed to negro woman by colonial men. After the operation, Rice admits, "it was hard to recognize *the woman* who had first *come* to my house". (Friel 1999: 500, italics mine) This also is how Molly Sweeney functions as an allegory of Ireland, drained of sexuality except accrued around fertility and Imaginary, naturalised genders, with expressly designated but half-articulated gestures of civility, sympathy, and sociability.¹² Molly Sweeney's world of pleasure is degraded in this Imaginary.

Then how Friel is concerned with translation is as a trope not only concerning languages, but how to translate between bodies and voices (such as Maire and Yolland). Helen Lojek draws attention to how, "Friel himself... seems to have discovered in the concept of translation a metaphor for the central impulse of his life's work." (Lojek 1994: 83) Translation's etymology includes "transformation, transmutation, interpretation, carrying over, and even removal from earth to heaven," all of which involve "the desire to understand, to find meaning, to make meaning if that is necessary." (Lojek 1994: 83) The

¹¹ In *Transitions* (1988), Kearney draws similar conclusions to my own, viz the implacable nature of Imaginary being, or Imaginary conflict, producing "ideological reductionism... leading to cultural *indifference*". (Kearney 1988: 17, 18) This warning over indifference, not only in terms of cruelty, identity and even gender (see Chapter 7), as all seek the masterful position of the father, is part the basis of this thesis.

¹² By the introduction of a colonial father-occluded Imaginary, gender was introduced as a new, Imaginary, and *natural* construct, when before, gender was an Imaginary, *conventional* construct, such as for Larry and Sheelah O'Toole. See the end of Chapter 5.

function of translation is coherent with law-making and anxiously recovering a displaced Law (anxiety being a lack of lack, or ultimately a lack of Law). Friel's experiments in translation might be considered a searching for flesh without violence in a non-violent recovery of Law, by which English will become "identifiably our own language." (Delaney 2000: 147) Love is the constructive way of translating the body into language. Violence or cannibalism is the destructive way of translating the body into language. If the Imaginary cannibalism and process of structural and military violence takes years in colonialism, this does not make the anxiety any less in the native's unconscious and body.

The legacy of colonialism is structured around this anxiety. The reason for lovelessness, in short, is how the coloniser has crossed the Real by an arbitrary violence, and crossing the Real by love, risks resurrecting that repressed violence. There is the freedom to love the coloniser as the coloniser now represents the Law of the Father, and there is the freedom to enjoy the possibilities of the new language, but, as I have argued, gesture and uncertainty plaque the new experience, which becomes populated with stereotypes who refuse responsibility. The refusal of responsibility serves the coloniser well, for one, especial Oedipal reason for the native in the position-as-child

The Colonial Void of Seriality, or I am not a Cannibal

Colonial law brings the native this one freedom - it removes the killing of fathers from the native, which is now a colonial prerogative - and not being able to kill the father is the ultimate anxiety and worst lawlessness for any masculine subject. Here is the critical component of the colonial cannibalisation of the native Imaginary, to remove the Oedipal injunction in the form of its prohibition - though shalt not kill the father - when actually enacting the prohibition is the truth of the Law of the (dead) Father. This truly deadening 'freedom' is the means of how the masculine, native subject cannot bring an end to the trial of his own masculinity. The trial continues by the native's own desire in the zombie-like drives of the stereotype cannibalising his own flesh, instead of a father's flesh.

If the colonial emptying of the native's body of *jouissance* is carried on indefinitely (in the anxious use of English), but without any replenishment of *jouissance* from access to the Law of the (dead) Father, from killing the father (there are no narratives of father-killing, except Hamlet, which only cements the English colonial father in place), there is an increasing loss of *jouissance* and hence individuality. The result is the serial production of fathers and sons.

In *Philadelphia, Here I Come!*, *jouissance*, or that which makes the subject particular, has been lost to Gar. What Private Gar elucidates, Richard Pine has labelled as "the identities of submerged imaginations". (Pine 1999: 11) Pine's 'submerged' trope would be better as 'indifferent'. Madge the housekeeper, long familiar with both Gar's father, S.B. and Gar, tells how when S.B. was young he was like Gar, and when the son Gar grows old, "*he'll turn out just the same*". (Friel 1996: 98, italics mine) To turn out the 'hellish' same, *jouissance* must be sacrificed, and desire given ground.

How Gar is unable to overcome the aimless drive of seriality is conditioned not only by family considerations but class position. Gar's inability to present himself as worthy of his love, Kate, sloping off with fright and shame on meeting her father, Senator Doogan, brings abject misery and self-loathing. The seriality of habit and speech between father and son radiates outwards and serves to consolidate strict class barriers - desire is given ground on class considerations - and a rigid class structure is another colonial inheritance

There is *jouissance* missing from Public Gar's life, and this enjoyment is stored symptomatically inside the body of Private Gar. Friel dramatises an anxious seriality within Gar by having two actors play a "Private Gar" and "Public Gar". Public Gar and Private Gar are, Friel says, "two views of the one man." (Friel 1996: 27) In Friel's directions, Public Gar may talk to Private Gar, but "*never sees him and never looks at him*. One cannot look at one's alter ego." (Friel 1996: 27, italics in original) Thus while Public Gar sees, Private Gar is only '*shown*' in the gaze - Private Gar has none of his own flesh on the signifier. Private Gar is Public Gar's voice, as Public Gar is S. B.'s voice, and all language comprises is an unfleshed serial and 'dead' voice between S.B. and Gar.

In *Philadelphia*, emotionally intense as the relation between father and son may be, it derives its emotional truth from a fiction based on ventriloquism. The fiction is the father's originality and authenticity - "this bloody yap about father and son and all this sentimental rubbish about 'homeland' and birthplace" is how Public Gar decries it all (Friel 1990: 79) - but the son is meant for a ventriloquist dummy to the father. Identity is inherited as the work, but really non-work, and the freedom, but really slavery, of the son becoming a ventriloquist's dummy. Nationalist authenticity, at first the hoped for outcome of post-colonial freedom carried on in the continuity between truly Irish fathers and sons, rapidly degenerates over a few generations into a kitsch quality, with father and son united by biology and an unavowable sacrifice of *jouissance* to a Law still anxiously outwith their safe grasp.

"All that remains is for the son, thus emasculated, to take the place of the weak and ineffectual father." (Kiberd 1996: 381) The paradox of such conservatism is that there can be no relation since there can be no flesh between the father and son (Law puts flesh on the signifier). A ritualistic ventriloquism between father and son opens onto a generational schism, but a generational schism preserving a social conservatism.

Since ritual is a good form for conveying a message as if it were unquestionable, it is often used to communicate those very things which are most in doubt.
(Moore and Myerhoff cited Baker 2006: 10)

Uncertainty prevails, unbearably so, within the supposed ritualistic certainty of their tied existence and habits. The crisis of Friel's *Philadelphia* is comparable to a crisis dallied with in Beckett's *Trilogy* - the ventriloquist is all too visible. The solution to the void offered by seriality becomes an inhuman ventriloquism, with the ventriloquist growing more visible with each generation.¹³ The more pure the seriality, the emptier the experience of life. Purity as a defence against history, against colonial influence, and against the corruption of the flesh, becomes more and more grotesque.¹⁴ However, this all is a defence against cannibalism - if the series of fathers and sons continues, it visibly proves an absence of cannibalism.¹⁵

It would seem the Oedipal drama of the play has an easy solution, for Gar to overthrow his father, or Church, or community, by emigrating (an illusory answer, as discussed already).

Yet the Oedipal conflict can have no resolution for an especial reason, when not only can Private Gar "no longer rely on the Father's guarantee", but he can no longer rely on his own guarantee of a father position within himself. (Lacan 1999a: 100) Gar's split personality is symbolic of the destroyed guarantee of the position of the father within Gar himself. Gar does not have the 'violently' imaginative power to cannibalise his father, the Law of the Father's basic prescription and necessity for change, and indeed life.

¹³ The *Trilogy* is part of the same history as *Philadelphia*, only dissolution through metonymy instead of exile as new metaphor is used for escaping the seriality of the patriarchal paternal metaphor (the abstracted-to-death quality of English is how Beckett expressed the problem).

¹⁴ The Irish under Catholic hegemony were even more serially fashioned in the position-as-child, terrified of authority in their entirety, such as how a democratically elected government was exposed in the position-as-child in the Mother and Child debacle.

¹⁵ "Much of the early colonial stereotyping... [had] depictions of Irish life steeped in blood-drinking, cannibalism, or incest". (Gibbons 2004: 34) The devotion of the Irish to the Catholic Eucharist is another sign of the anxiety over cannibalism. The Eucharistic service at least offered some palliative sublimation of the cannibalistic drive, if it was in service to paying off Symbolic debt to an aristocratic Catholic father-caste. The matter is transference over the cannibal Imaginary of the coloniser, projected onto the colonised.

Physical violence *can* be a recuperative method assuaging the anxiety that there is in fact a Law of the Father, simply by finding the strongest flesh and retroactively locating the Law of the Father there - the basis of every colonial project, if veils of legality and manifest destiny are drawn over colonial violence. Ned in *Philadelphia* is the classic stereotype in this regard, of the cowardly bully promising violence even playing sport - "There's only one way to put the fear of God up them bastards - (*Points to his boot.*) - every time" (Friel 1990: 69). Private Garr labels his supposed friends, "louts, bloody ignorant louts". (Friel 1990: 77) Public Garr is, of course, placid.

The Irish locating the Law of the Father through drunken violence was a profoundly gratifying stereotype of the Irish in a colonial Imaginary and legal system whereby colonial Law is the solution to a problem it creates. This stereotype was catered for by violent versions of Irish life, especially family life.¹⁶ Plays such as Tom Murphy's *A Whistle in the Dark* (1961) were hits in 1950s London (alongside depictions of working-class violence), confirming the stereotype in a 'progressive' fashion full of 'sympathy' for historical, 'Irish' realities. This, of course, was mere condescending racism.

With the eruption of the Troubles in the 1960s, violence such as this was freighted with new meaning - and instantly censored from the metropolitan stage. Whereas in a more openly racist, anti-Irish period of English history, Tom Murphy could be feted, Friel came to the fore in the period of the Troubles. With Friel, anxiety at colonial violence breeds retarded gestures and a purely linguistic form of seriality which unthreateningly runs parallel to colonial identity, without threatening violence against it.¹⁷

In contemporary drama, such interiorised problematics are basically mainstream, within a neo-colonial, globalised economy where self-representation is a quasi-legalistic compensatory ontology: I represent, therefore I am, and the self is like a legal brief, stocked with plausible denial. This is the quorum of Hamlets recognised beneath the surface of Friel's plays, which has been read out and intensely enjoyed by Anglo-audiences.

¹⁶ As Dukore points out, the 'savagery' of the Irish was to repeat violence outside the confines of the nuclear family (Dukore 1990: 24). Fighting in public as a form of recreational violence (and *jouissance*), now was the mark of an animal nature, whereas domestic violence would be more or less tolerated.

¹⁷ Now the Troubles have rescinded, it is safe for McDonagh can take the metropolitan stage. However, the pleasure McDonagh takes in father-bashing has its own sweet, post-colonial, post-Hamlet, and even post-Catholic pleasures.

This takes the discussion into the present, and an assessment of Friel's place in contemporary Irish drama. In any final analysis, the inheritance of the cannibalistic persecution of the native is a racism deeply embedded in both the colonial and then the native Imaginary.

We might call race the nocturnal side of the idea of the republic, the incert space where its revolutionary meaning comes to find itself stuck.

(Mbembé 2006: 145)

Such a legacy can be lensed through a consideration of racism beside the genre of the Gothic, a genre which "seems uniquely appropriate to capture the anomalies presented by Irishness to the racial Gothic of colonialism". (Gibbons 2004: 87) The genre is also a framing Friel himself would consider valid, as I now finally discuss.

The politics of race is always worked out in a politics of identity constructed around the differentiated serialisation of Imaginary species, divided between the 'colonial human' and 'native animal'. The species question of racism is part of an enduring unconscious truth of much political discourse in Donegal and Northern Ireland, where the political opposition are 'dirty animals' (made into political capital in the Hunger Strike of 1980), and the police are 'the pigs'.

Ireland, like South Africa, has known an apartheid system. Scholars as different as Maureen Wall and Conor Cruise O'Brien have called the penal laws of the eighteenth century by no other name. (Kiberd 2002: viii)

Race still darkly translates bodies in the politics of Ireland. What Frank and Rice achieve by their cat and dog fantasy is a serial identity invoking species - a matter also examined in *The Home Place*, in the long line of natives awaiting their head measurement by the coloniser. Fighting like "cats and dogs" is arguably a trope inherited from a racialised Imaginary stoked with hysterical violence - why else would Friel be so specific with how the men attack each other? A question over species, asking am I human or animal, and sexuation, am I male or female, is one rationale explaining the intimate but self-negating alterity Friel's masculine characters feel, on trial as English-speaking animals. To look on at the monologues in Friel is to see a signifying or 'significant animal,' (as in Carleton's *Going to Maynooth* and the exchange of the colt), on trial for its humanity.

Frank Sweeney and Rice are looking for love, but their missing sense of 'human' agency in the Symbolic means the voices and bodies inside Friel's characters, as well as characters themselves in the monologue plays, are separated from each other by invisible walls - the walls rise from a colonial gaze on the colonised. The glass walls *inside* the men, or between the characters in the monologue plays, are the glass walls of an unconscious zoological structure imposed on the colonised and maintained by an Imaginary threaded through the eye with a racially charged gaze, on their own bodies as well as on their own neighbours, surviving long after independence.

This racism deeply embedded in the colonised's own inherited Imaginary is an archetypally Gothic experience. Entering the domain of a foreign Symbolic is the kernel of Gothic experience - the Gothic is a fear of mixed blood, when a mixed Imaginary arises from a mixed Symbolic. Racism settles the division securely by marking flesh as the division which visibly bears the necessity of the division into the human and animal. For the colonised, it is the coloniser who enters with another Symbolic, racially dividing the Imaginary between human colonial and native animal.

In this context, the native, as in the Gothic, becomes slave to strange, seemingly irrational forces.

A law is being imposed upon the slave, that he should satisfy the desire and the pleasure [*jouissance*] of the other. It is not sufficient for him to plead for mercy, he has to go to work, and when you go to work, there are rules, hours - we enter into the domain of the symbolic. (Lacan 1988a: 223)

For the slave, it is insufficient to plead mercy when a colonial law is being imposed upon the colonised -- the colonised must go to work in the Symbolic domain of the coloniser's language to satisfy the desire of the colonial other. The desire is to prove 'I am not a cannibal' and 'I am not an animal'. Partly this is the result of the trickle-down Imaginary inheritance from Hamlet, the "paragon of animals" (2.2.309). The native is given the slave's work of becoming the paragon of animals, and finally then becoming human, by yielding power to the coloniser, and dying. *Hamlet* has such a Gothic, racist unconscious possibility in its rank. Colonial-*Hamlet* has been used as the Romantic-Gothic entry point (as Coleridge insisted, Hamlet is the one in the many), of a racialised discourse into native culture.

Friel recognises the Gothic background to contemporary Irish politics and the question of language when he considers how

the residue of [the colonial] presence *will still be with us*. This is an area that we have still to resolve, and that brings us back to the question of language for this is one of the big inheritances which we have received from the [coloniser] ... we must make [the colonisers language] identifiably our own language.
(from Delaney 2000: 147, italics mine)

A century after when *Translations* is set, the 1925 Commission for the Preservation of the Gaeltacht put the matter bleakly:

The task of *reviving* a language with no large neighbouring population which speaks even a distantly related dialect, and with one of the great world-languages to contend against, is one that has never been accomplished anywhere."
(cited Townsend 1999: 125, italics mine)

It may be that there is an Irish emotional reality which is silenced in English. It may be too that many Irish no longer experience that emotional reality, that it has been parched out of them, that a particular stream of Irish consciousness has dried up with the decay of the language. It may also be impossible to assess the psychic price of dispensing with a language that offered such potential for loquacious evasiveness.
(Lee 1989: 668)

The metaphor of 'reviving' a dead, silent Irish experience has Gothic overtones, a matter Friel knows well as he tries to resuscitate a voice of the Irish in English, "we must make English identifiably our own language." (quoted Delaney 2000: 147) How can a Gothic of English be removed from Irish history, with the English language in place?¹⁸ The mixing is in place, and "will still be with us", and cannot be removed, even for enlightened reasons, without more uncertainty and dislocation, as in the example of *Molly Sweeney*.

The psychic price of this mixing is uncertain, but language itself always has an uncertain price, and as the Irish establish a globalised perspective through the English language, they find themselves tumbled "into endless connection, [where] it is increasingly difficult to get out of each other's way." (Geertz cited Nairn 2007: 117)

The advent of new nationalisms, meaning the post-colonial, are part of that connection, and part of the resultant structures of evasion, or 'identity'. Mongrels need new rules. And all nations are becoming mongrels, hybrids or foundlings, in the circumstances of globalisation. (Nairn 2007: 117)

¹⁸ As elsewhere in the thesis, Irish writers are marked by a submerged high Gothic theory in their writing, searching beneath the flesh for a signifier, searching for the delight and even the love of an Other.

Post-colonial 'hybridity' has been the theoretical reinvention of the wheel of the Gothic, the Gothic being the literary genre constructed around the anxieties of translating bodies and voices into mixed voices and bodies.

Friel has shown Irish theatre (and others) a gentle lead with experiments in the translation of voices and bodies, while covering controversial, political material. His experiments are a search, without violence, for the flesh by which the coloniser's language can identifiably become everyone's own mongrel language. The traumas of purity and the schisms of history might then heal in a mongrel mixing of languages, dance, song, gesture and fertility. The audience, at the end of *Molly Sweeney*, is left with a "troubling lack of trouble",¹⁹ on Molly's account and their own, by dialogue full of ignorance and impurity, yet without any residue of anger:

Real - imagined - fact - fiction - fantasy - reality - there it seems to be. And it seems alright. And why should I question any of it any more? (Friel 1999: 509)

Molly seems to ask, why should I purify them any more? The personal allegory and the 'lighter' version of the translation would describe Molly's radical, "Irish" openness to experience.

However, as an economic allegory for neo-liberal Ireland, Molly's determined uncertainty has a dark translation, as a lack of responsibility for untrammelled, neo-liberal, market forces. Perhaps the most troubling truth is not the cannibal or the mongrel, but the cannibal *and* the mongrel. Not exclusive, annihilating metaphor or inclusive, affirming metonymy, but both exclusive and inclusive, annihilating and affirming, violent and easygoing, adult and childish, metaphor and metonymic. A troubling combination of economic cannibalism and cultural mongrelism may well be Ireland's contemporary split, and that is the troubling combination at the heart of contemporary neo-liberal capitalism, in Ireland, and elsewhere.

Capitalism generally requires and inflicts a lawlessness everywhere, with the intent purpose of opening on to the Real and finding or creating a signifier beneath the flesh, so as to market new flesh in a borderless market. The subjects of capital are left to analyse the drives of each other within the organisation of a denuded Symbolic dominated by the market, and the wealthy father position is its major *point-de-capiton*. Molly can be interpreted as the isolated, heavily medicalised, depoliticised subject of neoliberalism, ready for a lifetime of gossip.

In Friel's dramas, all this is called into uncertainty, but like Alexander Pope, not so as to shock.²⁰ Friel's drama generally considers what posterity can and is entitled to know by "dramatising the relationships between historical actors and the evidence that signifies their transactions". (Flanagan 1995: 208) However, the audience is not entitled to know everything – closure is neither permissible, possible, or desirable, because the evidence for trauma, whether it might be adduced from colonial, post-colonial or personal history, will always be insufficient. No body, no drama, and no voice can for Friel enclose the vicissitudes of history and trauma, and Friel's drama, if it resembles a trial process, will not finish like a trial, collapsing into judgement. Hence Friel's dramatic content and form are alike. Though there are undoubted remnants of political conflict which structure existence, for Friel, the post-structural is all that can become the personal. Friel has spoken of his characters as stereotypically Irish, and his artistic practice as one which "begins with stereotypes and must make them real". (cited Evans and Hill 2002: 456) So it is, Friel is a temperate dramatist of tepid living, sensitive people, a dramatist always stressing the "ordinariness of his characters." (Delaney 2000: 4) He is a dramatist who wishes for "sympathy and intelligence and understanding". (cited Delaney 2000: 4) Identifying with the providence of the weak, and indeed the stereotype, is Friel's exemplary gesture.

If his plays often have fixed structures, such as monologues, an audience is left to look for what escapes the structure and even the stage - an imagination is invited. In the uncertainties to the finish of *Molly Sweeney*, *Philadelphia*, and *Faith Healer*, what *might be* said, that is *not* said, is all that can *be* said, to be *personal*. Given Friel's awareness of history, what he is asking of the actors - a movement of thought required to address an audience in monologue or in split personalities, as if such an address to an unknown other is the very basis of their social being - is so painful, and yet so tightly bound up in the isolation of a body, as to be almost impossible to act. The isolation embodies the profound uncertainties Friel generates the more he loosens the formal devices of theatre from his writing, so much so drama approaches naked speech, as in *Molly Sweeney*.

The drama is in language as it is spoken and gestured, but it will not be made to shock.²¹ Since the trauma of colonial racism which wanted Hamlet in Donegal has been absorbed,

¹⁹ The phrase is from Paddy Lyons at the University of Glasgow.

²⁰ As Byron commented of Pope, and Pope's choosing not to shock, Pope being the most ethical of poets. (Byron 1936: 229)

²¹ In law, there is no movement without thought (intentionality and phallic *jouissance*), whereas in the body and in the unconscious, there is movement without thought, and thought without movement (the subject of enunciation and feminine *jouissance*), which patriarchal, rationalistic jurisprudence bars. The law demands movement and certainty, or intentionality, as in the

that mode of survival supported by a festering 'survival of revenge' mode (including revenge over other 'natives'), can be dispensed.²² A life of gentility and curiosity might start again and flourish even after all the unnamable vicissitudes of history, and that is Friel's heartfelt ethical gesture, made most of all to a local audience.

supposed certainty of our visible bodies placing a complete version of flesh on the signifier. The static monologue structure of *Molly Sweeney* is showing the audience thought without physical movement, in a representation that there is something beyond the certainty of the law, that is human - the human is also the unintentional.

²² David Lloyd speaks of 'survival' after trauma, as a mode of living. See Figure One, note 49. Beside the peace of survival, the colonial-Hamlet needs expurgated.

Chapter 7 - Marina Carr

For he knew how the dead and buried tend, contrary to what one might expect, to rise to the surface, in which they resemble the drowned.

(*Malone Dies*; T, 213)

In contrast to Brian Friel, Marina Carr's deliberately shocking dramas wind around wounding losses and intimate betrayals. "Violation and disturbance are the dominant features. Those in the know are all the more disturbed for it." (Jordan 2002: 258) Carr's drama is characterised by "heightened and excessive theatrical explorations of violence, death, loss and abjection", and it delves into those "traumatic chasmic gaps of authority" wherein "domestic violence, cycles of sexual abuse, incest and death pervade most of the relationships on stage." (Sihra 2005: 186-189) Carr's writing gorges on violence, sexual desire and incest, but instead of the position-as-child's deferral of authority to a 'saving' masculinist tradition of Irish theatre, this is a dramatist who will not defer responsibility among women for an almost unsayable history between men and women in Ireland. This taking of responsibility will mean the abjection of the position-as-child. Carr describes in her own Introduction to the first Faber collection of her plays how as children, the playwright and her friends would together concoct a heady brand of theatre.

We loved the havoc, the badness, the blood spillage, but loved equally restoring some sort of botched order and harmony. Ignorantly we had hit upon the first and last principles of dramatic art. (Carr 1999: x)

Carr has an inherent respect for the violent outpourings of children given free expression. Her memories of childhood are not of unspoilt nature and innocence, but the improvised wheelings of wild theatre. If to *épater le bourgeois* comprises a distinctive trait of Modernism, Carr seemingly obliges, in her own legend at least, from childhood onwards. With some botched order returning after every wheel turn of violence and excess, there is not only a cathartic pleasure, but a child taking on responsibility.

Importantly, this disorder is set *almost* right at the end. A 'Witch' character personifying mutability and destruction always survives to fly off and leave behind the scenes of excess (Carr 1999: x).¹ This witch character in Carr's more mature drama may be a child proper.

¹ Carr speculates how the Witch may be a symbol of Time (Carr 1999: x). The attribution recalls Beckett in *Proust* (1931), describing love for a woman from a man, when "intrinsically" the woman is,

less than nothing, but that in her nothingness there is active, mysterious and invisible, a current that forces him to bow down and worship an obscure and implacable Goddess, and

Sarah in *Ariel* (2002), says of Elaine, "ya babby witch in the cauldron. 'Thah child knows too much." (Carr 2002: 24) Sarah is referring to how Elaine has always, from childhood on, supported the dark manoeuvrings of her father, Fermoy. Children are held responsible for their support of a parent. Again in *Ariel*, there is Fermoy's Nietzschean claiming that the God he follows "is young. He's so young" - a god who is "terrifyin" to Boniface, Fermoy's brother, a more traditional, liberal Catholic. (Carr 2002: 16, 19) The face of God as both young and old is like Carr's own persona as child-playwright, creating and marvelling in violent chaos, visiting judgement on creation, and then restoring a botched order. Carr's child playwright, Fermoy himself, and Fermoy's God, all share a phallic and feminine mobility traversing child and father positions, acting with violent, blistering delight, both denying and finally affirming judgment. Fermoy takes this God as his model in life, and Elaine, Fermoy's daughter, becomes his witching familiar, and soon, Fermoy is on his way to becoming Taoiseach. As much as Fermoy sounds macho (or equally, Red Raftery in *On Raftery's Hill* (2000), both, for instance, deride the sanctity of Mother Ireland), the apparently primordial, patriarchal figure requires support from a willing child-acolyte. The two men's patriarchal status, and cruelty, relies on maintenance from daughters. Daughters take over a mothering role so that the mother's role is not only not diminished but re-engaged, supplemented, intensified, by being thoroughly Oedipalised. There is an intensification of violence exactly because of indifference, between mothers and daughters. At the end, Elaine will murder her mother. These children are always the sons of such patriarchs, no matter gender.

In Carr's drama, children will be held responsible for their support of such a God, or such a politician, and such a nation. The child is a part of *all* this botched, Oedipal order with its violent indifference to everything, except the position of the father. The child is capable of knowing, seeing, summing, rejecting, enjoying, creating, and participating in the dark strokes of fate done by patriarchs in their name, and should be held responsible - the image of childhood innocence is annihilated - childhood innocence is both the worst, and greatest, stereotype. The child-stereotype has its most harrowing exposé in *On Raftery's Hill* (2000).

In 2003 the Súcán Theatre Company produced the play and artistic director Carmel O'Reilly wonderfully described how Carr's "images are powerful, and she throws words

to make sacrifices of himself before her... whose sole condition of patronage is corruptibility, and into whose faith and worship all mankind is born, is the Goddess of Time. (Beckett 1999: 57)

Men in love must bow to Time's corruptibility, meaning love necessarily is served by an imagination not our own, a mutability, or intercession of the Other.

like gobs of paint." (cited Craigin 2003) O'Reilly's description conjures up a menacing kindergarten, with powerful themes treated in the broad, delighted and even satanic strokes of children. A 'gob' is slang for mouth, and *On Raftery's Hill* does spout images of a 'traditional' Irish family, but marked not only by the classic, Oedipal violence of an upset "Irish" kitchen, but incest between a father and his daughter happening on the kitchen table in full view of the audience.² Eamon Hughes describes this play as "a world at times almost without the mantle of humanity." (Hughes 2001: 138) The Sógán director Eric C. Engel commented how in *On Raftery's Hill*, Carr

makes incredible parallels between the rape of the landscape and the rape of our souls. You can look at any one of these characters and say they're a perpetrator and a victim, and yet every single one of the characters is aware of their own responsibility for their own behaviour. (cited Craigin 2003)

Such an *inclusive* sense of responsibility covering the child complicates the 'disingenuous' innocence of the child. In the play, Sorrel the daughter, after being raped by her father, takes the place of her sister, Dinah (perhaps Sorrel's mother), in the bed of her father. The pain, difficulty and truth of Carr's play is to engage with both the pleasure as well as pain of incest. In what is a thoughtful essay, Hughes speaks of how

through the character of Dinah, Carr dismisses a tendency to simplify or blur the distinctions between pleasure and pain like many of her contemporaries have done; she articulates complication and prioritises one over the other. Dinah has been a victim for twenty-seven years; Sorrel has been assaulted only once. How do we sum up the extent of Dinah's pain? Carr creates a world astray... (Hughes 2001: 149)

The abused child is not meant for, and cannot be, reclaimed for easy sentiment - why should Sorrel get all the sympathy simply for being the youngest and newest 'victim'? The sexuality of both Sorrel and Dinah is equally infantile and father-obsessed, as for so much 'adult sexuality' in patriarchal society. Infantile sexuality has as much to do with age as the position-as-child - *there is no a priori* connection to age, there is only positioning itself - there is only libido distributed among variable positions.

Though it might be difficult to accept, children can and may have a share in a world without the mantle of humanity, if a share, like any other, which cannot be counted except imaginatively. To absolve children and deny their sexuality is the stereotypical imagination

² The name recalls the blind poet Raftery (1784–1835). His best known poem, *Mise Raifteiri an Fíle* ('I am Raftery the poet'), begins, "I am Raftery the poet, full of hope and love", but then also there is, *Aisling an Bháis*, or *Vision of Death*.

of patriarchy. Instead, Carr makes no such salute to infantile or adult sexuality and their meaning, whether of innocence or not, but only the truth of passing pleasure and suffering (another influence of Beckett). Yes, Sorrel is wronged, and Ní Dhuibhne points out how the "point of view which recurs in her plays is that of a wronged child." (Ní Dhuibhne 2003: 68) However, to claim that here is a tragedy because 'innocent' children are involved is exactly as Hughes complains of, to simplify and blur distinctions between pleasure and pain for what is the critical and tabloid gratification of shouting tragedy. Tragedy is the opiate of the people, whenever people and critics turn tabloid critic for gratifying the pleasure of their own manufactured outrage and anger.

The Mai (1994) is another play investigating responsibility, as the children "know everything though they pretend not to". (Carr 1999: 171) The Mai's daughter is Millie, a name which deforms and even perverts *mille failte* (a thousand welcomes). "Mil-lie" tells of the thousand little lies the child tells herself so as to pretend she does not know. The thousand welcomes of childhood are a thousand, little, lies. At the end, speaking intimately to her mother, she twice pleads, "I don't know". (Carr 1999: 185) Millie is by now genuinely and pitifully timorous, ignorant, and cowardly after a childhood of prolonged, deliberate disingenuousness. This stereotyped disingenuous ignorance, which passes for childhood innocence, has become part of her and corrupted her so much that she hardly belongs on stage at all. Millie speaks mostly in melancholic monologue, living life along a parallel to her family, and her own society, consumed with the guilt of all her deflected desire.

Millie knows all of this. In her own words she has been teetering "along the fringe of the world with halting gait." (Carr 1999: 184) For the subject to know and pretend not to know is to live on the unreal fringe of the world, refusing responsibility. This child as an adult will neurotically repeat that childhood world, still fringed by guilty solitude, so as to test if the world the child was born into, defined by and excluded from, was even real. Adult life becomes the reality check of a disingenuous ignorance, or innocence - and hence even adult paranoia. The grown up position-as-child becomes like a dumb Greek chorus, destined to repeat what it saw as a child, but never to take part as an equal.

In *On Raftery's Hill* and *The Mai*, her gobs of paint vandalise the pious image of Irish family life, especially as that piety preserved childhood innocence in particular in matters of family break-up and incest. The truth of the child's desire, disingenuous ignorance and

responsibility is dealt with in honesty, but it cannot be wholly determined.³ Carr is a virtuous blackguard of Irish pieties and Irish theatre who refuses to dissemble and return Ireland to a renewed metaphysical origin. Before, when troubled, that metaphysical origin always has relied on incest versus childhood innocence as it guarantor of truth. Now the question of what constitutes innocence, the nation, and Irish theatre, has seldom been so open to interpretation.

This directness, passion, and well-guarded indignation, has earned Carr criticism, such as Merriman (1999), accusing Carr of satisfying bourgeois proclivities for claiming superiority over 'white trash'. Critics such as Merriman and Wallace cry out against Carr's showy promiscuity of influence in her doom-laden appropriations of Greek, Celtic, and Shakespearean myth, objecting to what is taken on board as facile and defeatist.⁴

I would instead argue Carr's language as gobs of paint are gobs of shite and gobs of quotes, and Carr's drama has a 'sterile,' anal, and potentially psychotic quality of imagistic dialogue. In an economy of excess, Carr writes violently and fully on the impossibility of a final image, a squeezing of painted words through a tube into complete dramatic representation - like a Modernist squeezing the false 'all' of society and literature into a fractured image - so that no final image of Ireland or Mother Ireland is possible. For instance, the early landmark play *Low in the Dark* debunks the traditional, sanctified image of Irish women and children, and the womb. Carr does lament over the 'all-fulfilling' banalities of female fertility only through motherhood (the obverse to masculine creativity in the arts). There now are only pieces of images and an empty nostalgia over that particular framing of Irish women.

However, there is more than cracked glass and empty nostalgia. Carr's suggestively 'irresponsible' grab-bag of images and myth (Greek, Shakespearean, Irish), and daring

³ This once more opens onto the issue of privacy, discussed for Edna O'Brien. Privacy is not a deterministic, rational, or even Imaginary property in the end - the pastoral myth, the beginning myth of privacy - is called into question.

⁴ Clare Wallace complains how the "heroines in these plays seem to abdicate from a confrontation with patriarchy, or if they do engage they, disappointingly, throw in the towel by committing suicide". (Wallace 2001: 437) In a Shakespearean tinted essay, Wallace finally criticised the trilogy in rather baleful terms: "it is interesting to note how simultaneously bleak and nostalgic these plays ultimately are." (Wallace 2001: 449) Merriman wildly berates Carr for "References to Shakespeare in *Portia Coughlan* [that] go no further than attempting to ironise in an unsubtle way the white trash world of Portia against that of the gentle lady of *The Merchant of Venice*." (Merriman 2003: 153) This is misleading. Portia in Shakespeare's play played a gender switching lawyer who like Portia in Carr's play tries to design "her own role to actualise, and then to exorcise, a Shylockean conception of love." (Hamill 1978: 241). Raphael is the Shylock figure, and it is his conception of 'watery love' Portia must exorcise.

clashes of myth, suggest something beyond a glancing satire on a conservative Ireland, but a joyful, combinatorial wildness and ignorance, indeed, a European euphony of drama. Carr would not care one whit for the criticism of Wallace and Merriman, indeed, the whole point is to be able to upset the status quo without supplementing the status quo. Her writing is guilt free, promiscuous, and without conspicuous conscience about creating upset.

Rather than fetishising or agonising over discourses of purity, in dramatic grab-bags of myth voiced in a Midland accent, such as *Portia Coughlan*, Carr has mongrelised myth in a mixing of an English and 'Irish' language. The writing has a true polymorphous perversity, a quality rarely found because rarely allowed and even more rarely applauded among Irish female authors. As well, near the beginning of a career, for a new, Irish, female playwright to even consider *Low in the Dark's* homage to Beckett has a striking and welcome ambition. Edna O'Brien's novel, *Night* (1972), is equally a brilliant novel of polymorphous beauty and perversity, and Éilís Ní Dhuibhne speaks of how Carr shares with O'Brien a skill in "selecting words which can... convey elemental passion." (Ní Dhuibhne 2003: 65)⁵ Such a polymorphous perversity (and polymorphous perversity is all imagination is), reveals a welcome depth of feeling and freedom of imagination. Carr is a welcome *femme fatale* vandalising a few patriarchal images of Irish piety constructing the meaning of the "Irish family", or "Irish drama", and even the "Irish feminist" text.

To set Carr in another important context embracing Ireland along with gender, Carr's role of dramatist restores Irish women to an ancient role of public lamentation, where "death is as much women's responsibility as birth is". (Bourke 1993: 160) This role in the past brought lamenting women "into conflict with the (male) Catholic clergy". (Bourke 1993: 161) Women will have back some responsibility for death, as artists.⁶

This discussion of incest, responsibility, innocence, stereotypes and death has deliberately set out here, near the start, so as not then to be gathered up into a 'climax' at the end of the thesis. This is only to follow Carr's drama, in which there is a new way of speaking of incest and responsibility that develops onto a new framing of agency, representation, and justice:

⁵ As Thompson writes of O'Brien's novel, "Mary Hooligan resists specularisation", that is, in a father-occluded imaginary, and positively refuses to be in debt, or be raddled by guilt. (Thompson 2006: 51) The same is true of Carr's female protagonists, should they survive life or not.

⁶ Hence, to have a share in the Law of the (dead) Father.

Incest is precisely the issue around which Foucault suggests the 'old', traditional ways of speaking about sex remain important as the newer bio-political ways of speaking encroach. The crime of incest appears to be a classic example of the old mode of power, but is in fact informed by newer ways of speaking about sex. Thus this 'old' mode of speaking has been reinstituted in the midst of a period in which Foucauldians would expect to find power operating bio-politically; a traditional prohibition kept alive via newer ways of speaking.
(Bell 1993: 182)

Fintan O'Toole astutely enough labelled the subject of paedophilia (the new way of discussing sex and incest) as a "great award winner," with contemporary plays offering audiences a "self-congratulatory game of taboo breaking [rather] than a real confrontation with the unspeakable."⁷ It bears repeating how Carr is more nuanced than any such tabloid-like critical stance maps out. As much as Carr's oeuvre may be read as criticising patriarchal, Catholic Ireland, Carr is careful not to turn the debate into a crisis of Irish masculinity - "every single one of the characters is aware of their own responsibility for their own behaviour." (cited Craigin 2003) The apportioning of blame and enactment of any social crisis (too often a tabloid driven theatre of punishment reinstalling renewed masculine authority), must include the women and the children, as well as the men of Ireland. Everyone shall have some, but not necessarily countable responsibility - and this is Carr's break-away from an Ireland of stereotypes of innocence and the uniperversity of the father, especially as it is found in the discourse of incest (or nowadays, paedophilia).

To gather up incest, responsibility, and stereotypes of innocence into a crescendo of critical fervour and morality would be exactly to repeat the old mode of speaking of power, via bio-politics, and a colonial structure of justice. Colonial justice fixated incest and the Oedipal complex on the colonial father's agency and responsibility, and vice versa, grounded by a discourse barring infantile sexuality transferred onto native culture. The proof of colonial justice is based on finding incest (or illicit native desire), and raising a new colonial father to re-impose the colonial order (the plot of Hamlet). Colonial concepts of incest and Oedipus became the ground not only of native being (in the Imaginary), but of native justice in a denuded, native Symbolic. Carr is sailing into difficult water, to botch a colonial ordering of agency, representation, and justice.

The post-colonial has as one test of its difference from the colonial a revising of the structural ties of incest, responsibility, innocence and stereotyping, not meaning their dismissal (thereby supplementing the colonial structure with chaos, noisy impossible chaos

⁷ Fintan O'Toole, "Paedophilia: the last great award winner", *Irish Times*, February 24th, 2007.

is a name-of-the-father, a chaos heralded with pleasure in the tabloid media), but for listening to and including the specifics of each in turn, and not turning or translating them into the one amorphously colonial, Oedipalised Thing. Innocence, responsibility, incest and stereotyping might *each* return to becoming mongrel. *Portia Coughlan* is such a play mongrelising all these themes, unravelling their stereotyped and legally avowed conscious, and unavowed, unconscious connection in patriarchy, which has Oedipalised love into the watery form of the love a parent has for a child, boiling with incest.⁸

Not only is this not straightforward - nothing is definite - but it is also to risk damnation in the old mode of justice. A new mode of justice and speaking can only come with a new mode of listening, and the old modes of listening based on identifying Oedipal guilt and crisis around the position of the father were *only* ways of speech dominated by looking without much listening - the outcome was always sight *or* blindness, and innocence *or* guilt, all in order to guarantee the position of the father, and yet paradoxically limit the responsibility of the father. In a father-occluded Imaginary, the father is a stereotype I have been calling the 'over-promoted father'.⁹

Edna O'Brien has almost re-dedicated her writing to attacking the enduring, older mode of power. *Down by the River* (1997), is a novel dedicated to the plight of a young girl who, mistreated by her father, is then further mistreated by the Law of the Father, as if the Law of the Father even then held her best interest. In the parliamentary debate over decriminalising homosexual acts in private (still expressly banned in motor vehicles, in a throwback to the Carrigan Report of 1935), after Mr. O'Kennedy cited the Constitution and valiantly then declared the family "a moral institution", Mr. Norris asked him then, "Is the incestuous family a moral institution?"¹⁰ Edna O'Brien's *Down by the River* and *On Raftery's Hill* takes O'Kennedy's question towards its limit, that incest in fantasy and practice whether painful or pleasurable has in fact been an 'Irish' institution.¹¹

⁸ Suicide from drowning, such as Portia Coughlan's, by a woman who feels her identity and integrity compromised by a misogynistic attack on her as a 'femme fatale,' could be an unconscious and defiant reply to the 'hard-boiled' valency of misogyny. Refusing to become hard-boiled by the (sic) boiling water of machismo, she kills herself in cold water, almost in a sublimely satiric mode.

⁹ In the Imaginary, All counts the 'same' as its exception, 'None'. The authority of the primordial father has both All and None of responsibility. Only in the Symbolic lies real responsibility.

¹⁰ Available online <http://historical-debates.oireachtas.ie/S/0137/S.0137.199306300006.html> [accessed 18 September 2007].

¹¹ An 'Irish' institution inherited as part of a father-occluded Imaginary, colonial inheritance. The more colonial justice and institutions are aligned with Oedipus and incest, the more resistance and indeed sexuality among a colonised people positioned as a child, becomes fraught with

The end of the first chapter in O'Brien's novel is magnificent, painful and incendiary.

In the City far away men of bristling goatee beards, men of serious preoccupied countenances, move through the great halls, corporeal figures of knowledge and gravity, the white of their wigs changing colour as they pass under the rotunda of livid light, ribs of yellow hair, smarting, becoming phosphorescent, powerful men, men with a swagger, a character personified by the spill of the gown or the angle of a coiffed wig, their juniors a few paces behind them laden with briefs and ledgers, the whole paraphernalia of the law in motion, some already at the bench, others, walking slowly to the appointed courts, men of principle who know nothing of the road or the road's soggy secret will one day be called to adjudicate upon it, for *all is always known*, nothing is secret, all is known and scriven upon the tablet of time. (O'Brien 1997: 6, italics mine)

The risk and cost of the pain of a new mode of listening with the ears of a *femme fatale* and a voice of the position of the child can be defrayed against the miseries and injustices of the old order of justice, of which Ireland knows so much, and has always known. Can Ireland (and elsewhere) have justice beyond the father-occluded Imaginary confines of such vainglorious and bombastic officers of the law and land?¹² The pleasures of the *femme fatale* and the position of the child are there in an unknowable promise of *jouissance*, a *jouissance* which may be avowable or unavowable, but a *jouissance* that could be shared beyond some masterful position of the father.

So, to begin again, as Ireland is asked in Carr's plays, I will now examine four plays playing with what too much history and justice in the wake of colonialism has engendered, the 'pure' Thing at the heart of both colonial justice and its inheritor, Catholic justice - a neo-racist-conservative-tabloid right to damn the other. The four plays are concerned with a desublimation of sexuation arising from the position-as-child becoming loose in the Imaginary network of sentiment, and abjected. The plays are *not about* sexual liberation (if they address sexual conformity), but how the position-as-child is refused and rejected (springing the violence of the Real into a conservative social context), without there being yet any validating regime, freedom or sexuality for women to exist by outside that frame.

The first play, *Low in the Dark* (1990) is still to attract much critical attention considered as it is, as a more juvenile play derivative of Beckett (Carr's abandoned university thesis

trauma. Intensified discourses of incest and barred infantile sexuality are part of a colonial, ideological apparatus. However, responsibility for this must be accepted as well - Ireland is going through a period of accepting such responsibility, as with the Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse.

¹² The election of Mary Robinson in 1990 held one such hope.

was on Beckett), and a plain, if worthy, feminist interrogation of gender politics. Christopher Murray notes how *Low in the Dark* is

a witty, absurdist play subverting the patriarchal view of women... Irish Catholic attitudes are parodied through a language recognisably traditional. The influence of Beckett is well absorbed. (Murray 1997: 235-6)

Murray admonished Carr over her earlier (but published later) play *Ullaloo* (1991). As "the dramatisation of an impasse it was a noted flop, and sadly shows how Beckett can sometimes be bad for a rising young playwright." (Murray 1997: 236) In *Ullaloo*, babies "are always declared male", and the play "comments on and subverts women's exclusion from representation." (McMullan 1993: 118) The man-woman relationship is "presented as played out, reduced to fetishes and absurd obsessions, offset by a dream of a unisex future." (Murray 1997: 236) These themes are obviously then continued in *Low in the Dark*, where, as Murray says, the scatological influence of Beckett is better absorbed. In the play Carr hints very well at the import of the 'Beckettian' impasse of 'nothing', and the import of the design of toilets, for the concept sexuation (as the earlier title, *Ullaloo*, already hinted). I will argue *Low in the Dark* is not simply an interrogation of gender and performativity, but how sublimely bored subjects become of their rudimentary, flesh-bound, Imaginary appreciation of sexuation.

The other three other plays, *The Mai* (1994), *Portia Coughlan* (1996), and *By the Bog of Cats* (1998), I group as Carr's 'trilogy'. If in the three plays, the lead, female protagonist commits suicide, the audience cannot categorise suicide as the (Romantic) pyrrhic victory of the dead over the living. Suicide might gainsay each protagonist's autonomy and integrity, but their suicide is also protesting against autonomy, and the autonomy epitomised by over-promoted men in the position of the father. The balance of responsibility is unknowable - the protagonists are neither heroines nor villains - there is no final image of them as either good (a new Mother Ireland) or evil (a bad Mother Ireland). This is yet another sign of a post-colonial moment - the deposition of allegory from the pinnacle of the resisting imagination.¹³

In *Low in the Dark*, motherhood, the classic path to salvation for Irish womanhood, is almost emptied of pleasure. Children are produced in multiples and then forgotten, and Bender constantly has children in a bath in a Warholesque poke at fertility. Bender feels 'famous' for fifteen minutes after birthing, and after birthing returns to the window to look

¹³ See Figure Three, notes 71-74.

out for men, flush with famous fertility.¹⁴ Babies certainly come and go without much effect, born in a bath next to the toilet and occasionally given joke names, such as calling one child, 'the Pope'. (Carr 1999: 54) The cult of fertility the over-promoted infant is being more than gently mocked. Binder and Bender form a *Godot*-like mother and daughter pairing, constantly anticipating the return of a father for any of Bender's children, when none return after intercourse. Sperm then are *Godot*-like, never coming in person, though always coming in function.

This disappointment drives Bender to keep pining for recognition in Dantesque fashion at that window, in what is both a medieval and romantic trope. "In the image of the open window, a fragment of reality becomes the expression of a romantic attitude... Nature appears as a lure". (Eitner 1995: 289) Window-advertising like this is the lure-and-rule motif discussed for Edna O'Brien's fiction, amplified and ridiculed - a woman's fertility, which has been the singular Irish pastoral, is put on cursory, public display - Bender is Carr's caricature of Mother Ireland.

There is a certain historical narcolepsy over the two women's history. In Bender's and Binder's names, the prefixes 'ben' and 'bin' both mean 'son of' in the Semitic (Arab / Hebrew) languages, and the suffix 'der' means 'of' in German. The two women are curiously labelled with an anonymous form of patronymic doubling, both names literally meaning "the son of of". Ireland's Judeo-Christian paternity, as in a play itself where no man is willing to claim paternity of any infant, becomes dubious, smeared at least over Europe and the Middle East. Bender and Binder were sired from a preposition the online OED entry describes thus:

... all the existing uses of of are derivative; many so remote as to retain no trace of the original sense, and so weakened as to be in themselves the expression of relatively indefinable syntactic relationships..

[OED online: Accessed April 2005]

Who could be the fathers of Bender and Binder? Perhaps their names obliterate any local paternity in an emphatic reflection of how global forces are coming to patronise the Irish

¹⁴ The version of the play published in 1990, in *The Crack in the Emerald*, goes further. There, Bender says to Baxter, "The woman spoke of an adulterer who roared in a pigsty for his severed flesh, to have it returned in a bowl of soup from the conjugal kitchen." (Carr 1990: 107). This could well be a child of incest, born of the severed flesh of a father's own children, then born "in a bowl of soup from the conjugal kitchen." The meaning is not clear altogether, and is all the more disturbing. Baxter is Bender's sexual partner, and 'Baxter' is itself a famous brand of soup. Noting this, Bender birthing in a bath is like Warhol's prints of Campbell's soup - except the flesh of mother and child in water.

economy, both in material production and desire, and this is signified more openly through the condition of women (the men retain the more 'realistic', phallic names of Bone and Baxter).

The play of gender through transexualism might also indicate an openness to 'global' designs of gender, in the personal as well as political. Baudrillard writes how

the transsexual is both a play on non-differentiation (of the two poles of sexuality) and a form of indifference to *jouissance*, to sex as *jouissance*... the transsexual tends towards artifice – both the anatomical artifice of changing sex and the play on vestimentary, morphological and gestural signs characteristic of cross-dressers.” (Baudrillard 2002: 9)

After all their transsexual experimenting, the ending of the play highlights a final attitude of indifference to *jouissance* in the monotone or robotic tone of their voices.

Bender (*monotone*) How is the knitting?
 Binder (*robotic*) Grand, grand, and how are you?
 Bender (*getting into the bath, no feeling*) A bit tired, and the baby?
 Binder (*sitting on the toilet*) Fine, and the baby? (Carr 1999: 99)

The ending is the same as the opening, with Binder sitting on the toilet again, the only change being Binder is pregnant and both are more tired. The female transsexual 'being' turns into another exhausted mother still having babies. Fertility seems an inescapable fate, and the two women are finally left to their own devices by the two men - how traditional and indifferent an end to seemingly a radical experiment.

The two men, Baxter and Bone (named for an Germano-Anglo-derived heritage), elect to join in with transexualism particularly by becoming pregnant. Thus, the play dissects a totemic fertility obsessing both women *and* men, a satire on the fetish of fertility in Catholic Ireland, among whose women *and* men it may be said, "When I hear the word culture, I reach for my womb!"

Bone becomes '*hugely pregnant*,' and Baxter develops a Lianhe Shce-like "*swelling or hump or pregnancy on his left shoulder*," connoting how masculine fertility in masculine fantasy is endowed with a god-like, Atlas motif, with men sustaining a huge world on their shoulders by their creativity. (Carr 1999: 96) At the finish, a propos of nothing, the men suddenly become paranoid and imagine the women as "out to kill us". (Carr 1999: 98) Baxter says, "They already have." (Carr 1999: 98) The effect could be interpreted as the transference of male misogyny reassigned to women as misanthropy - but the men

themselves want only female babies (so making for their own extinction), and this is their own unavowable death drive, reassigned to women. At the masculine limit of gender performance, acting pregnant, the men default to addressing the two women as 'other' - 'They are out to kill Us', an Imaginary mode of thought. Pregnancy has not carried them beyond traditional gender in so far as they cannot disabuse themselves of 'Them and Us' binary categories. What pregnancy and playing women to its supposed limit prompts the men to think on, is their extinction. Sexuation for the men is an Imaginary quality of 'Them and Us' underwritten by the masculine version of the death drive, one which comes through in their discourse (a denuded Symbolic of binary distinctions), even when their gestures and appearance are otherwise (acting feminine and pregnant). Masculine discourse ultimately constructs gender at the limit of a zero-sum game (at the limit of Imaginary identity), in the relation the masculine subject has with death. Sexuation for men thus is a neurotic compulsion - an Imaginary necessity of life and death. Less than nothing has changed, after all this experimenting.

In *Low in the Dark*, Carr, in contrast to Friel, chooses *exaggerated* gestures, this time of sexuation, as a remedy for characters in a crisis and unsure of gesture. An exaggerated, yet simplified concept of sexuation is economised into stereotypical body movements and dress styles. However, by the end of the play, the female characters are exhausted and the male characters paranoid - and everyone's energies are spent. The play has led to indifference and paranoia. Gender switching at the desultory level of physical stereotyping (including pregnancy) has brought only a pyrrhic victory over patriarchy's forms of sexuation, if an indifference to *jouissance* and paranoia are left over.¹⁵

In *Low in the Dark* a gestural politics of gendered identity is chequered as empty: men and women get pregnant, but without trace of lasting pleasure or paternity, either national (the global smears out nationalism's paternity) or personal (the exhaustion and paranoia).

¹⁵ See Artetxaga (2001) for an investigation of the obscene underside of gender bending in the fully institutional, "body politic". Her article investigates the brutal strip searches among republican female prisoners by male and female prison officers. In prisons, the "erasure of gender difference between men and women [prison] officers allowed and was a condition for the establishment of a choreography of sexual difference inscribed within a gender hierarchy according to which women prisoners were forced in to the subordinate position of women, while officers (women and men alike) were reaffirmed in the controlling position of men, and not just men but ethnically dominating men." (Artetxaga 2001: 20). The latter point draws out the potential reinscription of colonial values within 'liberation' discourses of gender freedom - or, freedom for whom, and to do what? See Chapter 7.

This replication of gender leads to a strange, shared scene among all the characters, an ensemble trading of insults with the word 'eejit'. In unison each accuses the others of being an 'eejit'. (Carr 1999: 91)¹⁶ 'Eejit' is Carr's pun on "e.g. it", with the characters literally challenging each other to offer themselves as an example, an example of some indefinite object. The indefinite object transacted, "it", is gender. It is examples of gender the characters constantly purvey and rehearse using each other as props of private nostalgia, though almost on every occasion, the character directing the scene from private memory breaks in to reprimand his or her directed partner. Reprimanding each other over inept gender-swapping is the only available pleasure. Gender has developed into an object for mastery - the *petit* primordial father of patriarchy has been reinvented and extended to women by making gender the object of a master-pedagogy. Society now is a post-nationalist, post-colonial gender-school, where the director of the scene or master of gender always cuts in (in the style of political correctness), but when their sexual memories and pleasures are so private, shared pleasure or *jouissance*, and hence truth, becomes limited, if not impossible. Gender is another deeply stupid basis for any pedagogy (along with race), and yet characters act as if gender can be learned.¹⁷

Some unspoken discourse demands a Law of Gender, placing gender on the signifier, as if gender also, like flesh in bio-power, can become the basis of a disciplinary subject of study - "You see you can do it [gender] if you want to" - but without any character on stage having access, by a shared intelligibility, to this Law of Gender. (Carr 1999: 71) Precisely because the Law of Gender is framed as voluntary, "You can do it if you want to" (itself a neo-liberal mantra), everyone must have access to it, when really no-one has access. This structure arises with the demands of a neo-liberal Other, paradoxically lionising the private (gender) as the harbinger of (public) choice and enjoyment.

Gender via voluntary transexualism is a wheel being reinvented and played out to exhaustion and paranoia, precisely in order for gender to become for globalisation what the good child was to colonialism, an object of the Discourse of the Master which keeps the position of a colonial, masterful father intact. A colonial Law of the Father is given new

¹⁶ The repeated use of 'Eejit' is a reprise of the sequence of abuse in *Waiting for Godot*, "Moron! Vermin! Abortion! Morpion! Sewer rat! Curate! Cretin! Critic!" (Beckett 1990: 70) Now, there is even less variety and more indifference in signification even if it *appears* as if there is more difference.

¹⁷ The subject in the father-occluded Imaginary is given to the drives. The obsession with paternal mortality is a manifestation of the immortality of the drives, the drives being libido not conditioned by desire (libido not conditioned by desire in the Symbolic). Thus, the Imaginary position of the father *seeks to remain* immortal, so long as it can direct the drives, in its own terms, by education and development programmes.

'life' from this neo-liberal or neo-colonial Law of Gender for a new form of Judeo-Christian neo-colonialism - look to the surnames of all four.

Here is a society with watery gender-love as the new 'Foucauldian' process of socialisation. Their performativity of gender, like that of courtly love, seeks to mount its own obstacle in a "highly refined way of making up for the absence of the sexual relationship, by feigning we are the ones who erect an obstacle". (Lacan 1999b: 69) Instead of the beloved as love object, *Low in the Dark* is dedicated to seeing gender as a love object, and the "failure is the object." (Lacan 1999c: 58) Gender love becomes successor to courtly love, and gender is becoming the neo-colonial object replacing feminine-child-flesh as the object of patriarchal romance.

This ideological conviction in the performativity of gender is also intensely sentimental, since gender remains, for the law-abiding subject of gender, within a denuded Symbolic remit unproblematically structured by Them and Us (whatever switching between Them and Us occurs). It is of no consequence should the female sex have access to the colonial position of the father - the neo-colonial development - what matters is that every Judeo-Christian, 'civilised' subject may learn to lecture the 'developing' world on gender (while neo-colonial globalisation makes a land grab). Gender becomes a new form of childhood, and the Western neo-colonial subject shall not teach the natives to be 'good children', it shall teach them to be 'good genders'. Now the 'civilised' female and male sex have even less to differentiate them than before. There is an even more intense form of seriality, or indifference, between men and women, and this is the price of the neo-colonial land-grab, the *jouissance* lost.

Us and Them now are known by Judeo-Christian-Anglo-Germanic Good Gender (there is no Irish-Gaelic naming), versus, presumably, Chinese-Muslim Bad Gender, if the female names including the Semitic, Bender and Binder, complicate matters.

However, this potential openness and contamination is addressed by the structure since the feminine is still *made* and named to represent a racial and religious heterogeneity, the female subject is the one who is *made* to remain at home while the neo-colonial father figure still 'wanders freely' outside (as in Milton's poem). This new courtly-gender love has entirely failed for Bender and Binder, waiting hopelessly and hoping at the stage window. The Law of Gender repeats the exclusion of the feminine from the Law of the Father.

While the colonial discourse on infantile sexuality and childhood distracted and controlled both the lower classes and native while they were dispossessed of land, now the neo-colonial discourse on gender does the same. Outside the window, Ireland is being sold to neo-colonial interests, and the women, like Maire with Yolland, are looking for a love among a class or race of person outside their own, for affirmation in this neo-colonial Law of Gender as the new Law of the Father. *Low in the Dark* describes the entry of neo-colonialism into Ireland, with the only accepted histrionic point of entry for the lower classes and native (with its built-in political failure), no longer Hamlet, but the colourfully adumbrated, title-less transsexual. The stage is marked by an interior, domestic landscape, but bare of land. There is not one connection of land and desire, only the space of a toilet and bath, and a wall around them - their version of the private.

Whether directions are perfect or not, whether the performance is able or not, each performance of gender, whether cross-gendered or not, must finally stall if, as Baxter says, "Let's not overdo it, the heart's not up to such powerful feeling." (Carr 1999: 71) This anticipates an expected limit on success, meaning the anticipation of failure (like *Hamlet*), and this failure structurally is the limit of the new neo-colonial, masculine superego held in the Law of Gender. The planned absorption and wastage of lower class and native *jouissance* is already planned, and all for occluding a grabbing of land.¹⁸

In *Imagined Communities* (1983), Benedict Andersen framed nationality in the Imaginary register (nations always are Imaginary). Phillipe Sollers advances a similar logic, commenting how,

A community of the signifier can but be imaginary. An equals sign cannot be put between two discursive 'reals' - just as there can be no common sexual denominator, no common sexual measure. This means that there are as many sexualities as there are sexed individuals. (Sollers 1977: 329)

What *Low in the Dark* critiques is how globalisation / neo-liberalism, has successfully moved the romance of flesh-marginality and coloured racism, towards a rarefied, even more disingenuously private conception of gender-marginality and uncoloured racism. There is the failure of gender as love object to generate a community, or by any stretch of the imagination, a community or nation.

¹⁸ See Figure One, note 47.

At an aporetic distance, transsexualism acquires the appearance and property of immobility and inertia (like a heavenly father) before which, on the way, one falls exhausted (like Hamlet, or Ossian's Celt). In the confluence of "of of" and "e.g. it", in the paranoia of men and the exhaustion of women, gender may have lost its Judeo-Christian paternity and stereotyping, but now gender itself has become god-like, and elected gender has become the opiate of the new neo-colonial, Western, democratic, Calvinist elect, able to lecture the 'developing' world about the salvation of 'free' market, metaphoric, gender. Gender indifference is the path to preaching and retroactively *proving* the 'democratic' equality of a population. Such a discourse and its impossibility for the native culture, as it stands, is made for shattering cultural traditions based on gender division in the 'developing' world. Gender is the retroactive entry point of democratic neo-colonialism's Law of Gender into the 'developing' world.

The alternative to this situation is addressed by Curtains, who completely cloaks her physical appearance and difference, covered as she is "from head to toe in heavy, brocaded curtains and rail". (Carr 1999: 5) Versus a passive Imaginary fertility supplementing the patriarchal position of the father (and mother, as imperfect-copy of the father, normalising the father), Curtains dresses against the doctrine of coverture, whereby a woman's existence was legally transferable over to a husband in law. Till late in the nineteenth century, marriage for women implied becoming a *femme couverte* (literally 'covered woman'), a legal concept by which a woman's property as well as person was incorporated within that of her husband.¹⁹ Bender's children are all male, with legal and medical sounding names and nicknames, such as the three Jonathons, ('Jonathan, Jonathan and Jonathon' sounds like a law firm), the 'Doctor', and the 'Pope'. This progeny incorporates a cultural edifice compensating for woman's dispossession by building a personal clerical-judicial-medical retinue manned by her own sons. As one son says elsewhere in Irish literature, "Why shouldn't my mother invest in immortality? After all, that's what mothers are for?" (*The Lonely Passion of Judith Hearne*; Moore 1965: 131)²⁰ Bender manically repeats a patriarchal tradition to possess the phallus through the agency of sons, and that

¹⁹ The Married Women's Property Act (1870) finally allowed married women to own their own property. Before then, all married women's property belonged to the husband. In Ireland, the National Health Insurance Act (1929), stated, "a woman married after the passing of this Act shall not, during her coverture, be entitled to be a voluntary contributor, and any such woman who is at the date of her marriage a voluntary contributor shall as from such date cease to be such a contributor." In the Married Women's Status Act (1957), legal stipulations from 1837 are carried over pertaining to "the will of a married woman made during coverture whether she is or is not possessed of or entitled to any property at the time of making it."

²⁰ Another way of pointing to how women have most easily accessed the Law of the Father, and its drive to immortality in a father-occluded Imaginary, from having sons.

way to access the Law of the Father, and have phallic *jouissance*. Curtains, however, is the sign of feminine *jouissance*, or the possibility of the signifier.

Curtains avails herself of the right to cover up at her own discretion, in a skit on Freud's enigma – what does a woman want? The audience are kept in visual ignorance by her envelope of curtains, which symbolically doubles as contraception, blocking the myth of the 'knowing' and so 'fertilising,' male gaze. Curtains does not become pregnant, though she has sexual relations with Baxter – her covering acts as a contraceptive, or more specifically, her covering is a skit on a condom. By covering Curtains in brocaded curtains, Carr satirises the culturally bound (Imaginary) patriarchal phallus not only controlling and owning the female body, but pretending to *part and enter* the female body like curtains, should it wish.²¹

In the patriarchal father-occluded Imaginary, speech is meant to command and is useless, meaningless and even painful, in the mobility and sterility of the speech accompanying feminine mobility. Bone complains, "They just talk, they never stop and there's no sense *in* anything they say, ever". (Carr 1999: 19, italics mine) The preposition is important. To the men there is no sense in women as speaking subjects, no sense *in* talking curtains, because their imagination has no depth as it is locked in an Imaginary bind ('depth psychology' is a masculinist, mythic, alienated response). What speech there is, for the masculine subject, is excremental (the signifier is excrement). Female speech to Bone and Baxter should exemplify and partake of the genre of the visible (the Imaginary); speech should be transparent. Bone cannot and will not, and is not yet imaginatively capable, of appreciating the immediate horizon of woman as a speaking veil, and a veil made to acknowledge the residual mystery of the signifier under Imaginary flesh.

Curtains' discretion thus does not solely address some visual or imaginary phenomenology, but signification and the role of the signifier in sexuation. Curtains is all the time encouraging the men and the women to re-tell the story of the romance between a man and a woman, and use their imagination, so as to inject a new signifier of their own into romance, to stop their leading parallel lives. Thus, if Curtains is without issue of child, she is not without issue – Curtains issues the signifier, but can the others *listen*? Is Curtains

²¹ Or, the Imaginary version of castration. Two controversial variations on Curtains' character are left open by Carr's instructions. First, *Low in the Dark* might be produced with a burqa for Curtains' costume, the burqa being also designed for head-to-toe cover. Second, since Curtains "can be any age", Carr allows for a very young woman, even a girl in the role.

intelligible, or will she be the voice continuing unintelligibly behind the curtain in Beckett's *Not I?* (Beckett 1990: 376)

Curtains effects an economy hoping for distraction in signification and not simply appearances. Her sexual pleasure (with partner Baxter), is not given over to propagation but to the joyful sterility of story-telling, a rendering of life in narrative inspiring a "consumption of energies in *jouissance*.... by vain simulacrums, blissful intensities, instead of productive / consumable objects". (Lyotard 1978: 54) The productive / consumable objects in the play are children and gender (linked together in the Law of Gender). Curtains is willing them all towards enjoying pleasures through sterile, wasted forms, a bodily bliss without consumable or utilitarian object. The stories Curtains relates are her beginning of pleasure, hoping for the signifier.

Curtains pursues *jouissance* through improvising, in her own manner, and prompting the others to do so, on the foundational narrative organising and obsessing the other characters, of heterosexual romance, or when a boy meets a girl. 'Curtains' comes from the Latin 'court,' and Carr uses it to pun on romantic courting. Any improvisation on this courting, Curtains dress code implies, is deliverable only by blocking the gaze on her body. Love instead for Curtains is a matter of talking, not looking. Baxter says love means not having to talk, and Curtains tells him, "You're with a talker." (Carr 1999: 56)

However, the so-called masculine gaze over the female body has paralysed narrative, immobilising it at heterosexual romance.²² This 'masculine' gaze is upheld not only by male characters, but by female characters, and with even more violence. For instance, it is Binder who shouts at Curtains, "Open those bloody curtains!", and Bender who adds,

I'd love to rip them off her! There is a life to be lived, I'd say as I'd rip them off... then I'd tell her, it's not every woman can say that she's been loved!
(Carr 1999: 7)

The female subject has her share of phallic *jouissance* in the gaze - nowhere do the men even approach this scopic violence.

The others physically improvised on gender for improvising on an exhausted heterosexual narrative, especially its courtly version, without ever paying attention to the fundamental basis of a narrative of sexuation in signification. While the other characters register gender

²² The 'masculine gaze' is the gaze of a father-occluded Imaginary.

by physical gestures and clichés of voice, Curtains locates gender within signification, and to direct attention to the signifier, she covers herself. Thus, she provokes the other character's, as well as the audience's imagination, into the service of how and what she *might* signify *inside* her speech, versus inside her flesh, beneath her covering.

Curtains' story always involves a man and woman coming together, but the man and the woman come from diametrically opposite directions. First the pair come from north and south, then northeast and southwest, travelling in straight lines towards each other, not quite meeting, then only to retreat. This topological exactitude suggests the pair follow a compass, even the same compass at the same time, but in opposite directions, to a central location, and failing to recognise each other, or their destination, go back. This is a phallic mobility and *jouissance* whose 'come' is not compatible with any other subject. This basically is a mapping of masturbation, or the "*jouissance* of the idiot". (Lacan 1999b: 81) Carr's symbolism is how these so-called men and women cannot meet physically, when two Imaginary bodies can only collide and bounce apart, or annihilate the other (binary opposition), without ever meeting, like masturbation's Imaginary signifier and the referent of sexuality.

The 'straightness' of approach by compass signals compulsory heterosexuality, but their sexual magnetism fails relentlessly, driven as it is by a phallic *jouissance* with exclusion for its structural basis. Curtain's narrative is a parable of the failure of the (heterosexual) sexual relationship. Rather than acknowledge and trust in something unsayable but communicable, low in the dark, Bone and Baxter would rather pretend to learn to *be women* (physically, in gestures and a clichéd mimesis of gender, including pregnancy), rather than *speak as women* (in darkened signification, meaning open to enunciation, and certainly not in a confessional mode). The failure is how the masculine is not willing to go down low in the dark 'beneath' any 'enlightened' Imaginary to find the signifier.²³

The structural motif in *Low in the Dark* of couples who never meet continues in more subtle, naturalistic ways in the trilogy of plays, *The Mai*, *Portia Coughlan*, and *By the Bog of Cats*.

²³ Carr's title is also a pun connecting listening and cunnilingus, taken from Beckett. "I don't mind going on my way I said, swinging low in the dark over the earth, along the little empty country roads. And I said there was little likelihood of my being molested and that it was more likely I should molest them, if they saw me." (Beckett 1994: 66)

In these plays, failed relationships lead to death by suicide of the lead, female protagonist. Suicide, especially by mothers (*Portia Coughlan* and *The Mai*), may be read as ideological struggle: "an appropriation of the other's privileged thematic space, a radical reversal of its meanings and oppositions, a process whereby a pre-existing symbolic act is inverted". (Jameson 1996: 166) The thematic space appropriated is Imaginary death, with suicide a radical reversal of martyrdom, and birth, the expected symbolic act expected of mothers, inverted. Motherhood becomes a bane to such women when it is the pre-eminent 'All' of their social role. Motherhood only opens up to

the problem of feeling they have given up on some *jouissance*, so that someone might make an attempt to reclaim the position of the 'true woman' by distancing herself from the position of motherhood. While a mother insists on the position of having, a 'true woman' exposes her lack and is willing to sacrifice her possessions. (Copjec 2004: 101)

Infanticide is the ultimate means of "discovering a woman being a mother". (Copjec 2004: 100) Her possessions include her own flesh and the flesh of children - the abortion debate is based on the conflict of whose flesh owns the flesh of children - and in Catholic ideology the woman who aborts a child is a despised *femme fatale*. The female suicide is the life belonging to a woman who, if she is not permitted to remove the flesh to reveal the signifier (the barred *femme fatale*), can at least remove flesh through her own death with suicide. Suicide is a negativised Law of the Father.

Carr's fascination with suicide and Greek tragedy is predicated not on constructing tragedy as a way by which to come to terms with death, but as a way of exposing lack and bringing lack to life, though not necessarily through death. This is more

a case of reading tragedy, through mourning, as a way of reiterating death into the praxis of life. Since death is a contested field, whoever controls death is crucial for the functioning of the city-state. (Taxidou 2004: 8)

Carr contests death as only an Imaginary construct - there is a death of the voice in the father-occluded Imaginary, and like O'Brien, she raises a feminine voice and mobility which insists on access not only to the Law of the Father (consecrated in the Irish state's family law), but a Law of Desire, a Law which risks the disappearance of the flesh in

finding the signifier (the subject of death).²⁴ Representations of female suicide are Carr's path to opening up these un-prescribed for possibilities in the Irish state.²⁵

Suicide (as well as nihilism)²⁶ becomes an appropriation of power and ownership over the body against an Irish state which through its laws on contraception and abortion has laid absolute claim to a right of life over and above, as well as entering into, the female body owned by the female subject.

Owning the body means to own death, and securing the body at death means securing the vigour of the body's final and perhaps most important act, its ritualised disappearance. A person's "knowledge or wisdom, but above all his real life... first assumes transmissible form at the moment of his death." (Benjamin 1973: 94)²⁷ Murphy cites Derrida, that, "there can be no living without being defined by the dead". (Murphy 2006: 400) Derrida has also written that this "concern for death, this awakening that keeps vigil over death, this conscience that looks death in the face is another name for freedom." (Derrida 1995: 15) In Carr's trilogy, it is women acting as individuals who insist on the work of death (not simply the death of flesh), as a final freedom to follow desire, even if such desire-in-death must cohere with flesh-in-death as the only freedom possible in the flesh-incensed, father-

²⁴ The control over death is the 'dark' side of the Law of the Father, whereby removing flesh is not for finding the signifier, but for finding dead flesh to further consolidate the Law of the Father and its repression of the Law of Desire.

²⁵ The lack of possibility is put in *Chains and Change*, the 1971 publication of the Irish Women's Liberation Movement. In that publication, it was emphatically stated how, "upon marriage a woman in Ireland enters a state of civil death". (Ferriter 2004: 721) In the same year, a Women's Political Association was established to support women seeking public office. If women are now claiming participation in a state-function supplemented by control over death as well as life, the process of reforming family law (especially incorporating European law), has been steadily met in a battle of attrition. For instance, the 'All Party Report on the Constitution' recently recommended a civil partnership system should be formed, instead of offering marriage to same-sex couples. The system would accommodate cohabiting and same-sex couples, leaving the original definition of 'family,' based on heterosexual marriage, intact. There are also baleful statements such as, "The committee was affected by instances presented to it of how society seems to be disposed to treat the natural or birth father heartlessly." (Irish Constitution, Tenth Progress Report: The Family) Available online at <http://www.constitution.ie/publications/default.asp?UserLang=EN> [accessed 9th April 2007].

²⁶ McDonagh's characters' cavalier attitude to death joins in with Carr's suicides, so far as following their desire, to the death, only with McDonagh, of a father-figure.

²⁷ Paula Murphy argues that in the trilogy, Carr "stages the universal human tragedy of the subject cut off from the real, who yearns for the *objet petit a* that promises to fill the void". (Murphy 2006: 391) With *only* the *objet a*, and without desire, the subject is consigned to the restlessness of the drives, or an aim without a goal. Politically, this too accords with Hamlet, whose goal is death, but only to install a father figure, which does not happen with Carr. Carr's protagonist's suffer from Hamlet-types without desire *for them* (Robert, Carthage, Raphael). Murphy chooses to recuperate Carr as another 'universalist' writer of Hamlet.

occluded Imaginary.²⁸ This work definitively removes women from the slave-work in a father-occluded Imaginary, of biological fertility.

Two suicides (in *The Mai* and *Portia Coughlan*) take place by water, and a third, that of Hester Swane in *By the Bog of Cats*, releases Hester's heart-soul, "lyin' there on top of her chest like some dark-feathered bird." (Carr 1999: 341) Deaths by water, or death into air, deny to the earth the bodies of all three women. The classic, patriarchal affect of earth and death as bearing fertile fruit, in the femininity of Mother Nature, is disavowed.

Also, the repetition of the Medea myth is clear in *By the Bog of Cats*' myth, and the Medea myth has been interestingly described as correlative to the Oedipus myth, brandishing a "hostility towards children," instead of the infant's destructive urges towards parents in the Oedipal complex. (Corti 1998: xvi) This is crucial - that there can exist not simply an oppositional, but a correlative to Oedipus - which opens out to the potential antipathy of mothers for children (versus fathers 'hating' sons and the dereliction of the girl child in Oedipus).

The character of Portia Coughlan, though she does not go so far as to take the life of her child as does Hester Swane, feels a ferocity being around them: "Their toys is weapons for me to hurt them with, givin' them a bath is a place I could drown them." (Carr 1999: 233) Instead of mothers mimicking a private form of the state, invested with the political power which "had assigned itself the task of administering life" (Foucault 1998: 139), Carr's protagonists cut short the 'natural' span of life to bring about a "a metaphoric ruin [which] breaks the frames that society relies upon to produce meaning." (Higonnet 2000: 229) The suicide of her protagonists might open out onto a discussion going beyond the metaphoric core of the Law of the Father, and not simply its metaphoric ruin (death of the flesh).

Any death by suicide was a scandal in Ireland - suicide was a criminal act up till 1993, a very late date in the European context.²⁹ In 1979, Máire Geoghegan-Quinn was appointed Minister for the Gaeltacht, the first woman to be appointed to cabinet, and as Minister of

²⁸ Carr's trilogy is tempting to consider as supplemental to Beckett's *Trilogy*, which dallies over masculine impotence and a hysterical life scorning mastery, and Carr's insistence on feminine potency by a death proving self-mastery. Both open onto the question of the signifier and the Law of Desire, in their different ways.

²⁹ Suicide was decriminalised in France in 1898 and in the UK in 1960, a fact brought into the debates on suicide in the Irish parliament. See historical-debates.oireachtas.ie/S/0130/S.0130.199111270006.html [accessed 18th August 2007]. Suicide may well have become an issue in Ireland's entry into a 'European' modernity.

Justice in 1993, she decriminalised both homosexuality and suicide.³⁰ Suicide robs death of a majesty reserved in flesh for God or the State, and their *lése-majeste* over life. Suicide is theft from the master, thieving the pleasure of death and the vicissitudes of the death drive away from the master signifier of death as the death of flesh. Suicide invokes the lack of the signifier, not merely the lack of a master signifier (or the patriarchal deposition of suicide as the act of the weak and impotent).

Once again, the correlative comparison again might be with Beckett, whose protagonists, though impotent, refuse to commit suicide, famously so at the end of the *Trilogy* in those last, impotent, yet un-deadly words:

... it will be I, it will be the silence, where I am, I don't know, I'll never know,
in the silence you don't know, you must go on, I can't go on, I'll go on. (*I*, 418)

While Beckett's narrator reverses patriarchal masculinity's avowed glorification of the death of flesh, Carr's protagonists definitively refuse to go on, in opposition to the female stereotype enjoined in motherhood to do the opposite, and refuse not to go on.

Ideologies do not mainly supply their symbolic significance in positive terms, but in their reactive characters, such as those who suicide. Martyrs are the avowed version of suicide so long as death is addressed to the position of the father, including Jesus.³¹ These suicide *are* blasphemous voices shouting against the silent curse of the ideally silent flesh granted by the father in his father-occluded Imaginary.³² Such figures as Carr's protagonists embody an ideology of resistance through actions beyond any complete, Imaginary version of signification, for these actions might only, but not completely,

³⁰ Countess Markievicz was Minister for Labour in 1919, in the Dáil of the revolutionary period, preceding the official foundation of the state in 1922. Before 1993, suicide had been a criminal act and those who attempted suicide were to be arrested. Geoghan-Quinn sponsored the Criminal Law (Suicide) (No. 2) Bill (1993) arguing suicide be considered a matter of health, instead of incurring criminal sanction. Criminality meant suicide was not only difficult to discuss, emotionally, but improper association or foreknowledge of the felony might incur criminal charges. Parliamentary debates are available online at <http://www.oireachtas-debates.gov.ie>. See for instance, the debate in Seanad Éireann - Volume 136 - 03 June, 1993, Criminal Law (Suicide) (No. 2) Bill, 1993: Second Stage. Between 1945 and 1995 the rate of suicide in Ireland rose from 2.38 to 10.69 per 100,000, and "spending on mental health was actually falling" (Ferriter 2004: 707). Suicide, especially by young people, is a growing, public concern in Ireland. Carr is contributing to a debate on the subject in Ireland, among women and men, whether appreciated or not.

³¹ "Thinkest thou that I cannot pray now to my Father, and He shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?" (Matthew 26:53)

³² See Bassols et al. (1994) for a Lacanian perspective on blasphemy, and "the fundamental function of cursing God". (Bassols et al. 1994: 192)

be deciphered in terms of what it opposes or resists, seeks to displace or modify. Seen from this perspective, sexual doctrines which take on non-sexual meanings, and which officially turn on the matter of 'salvation,' in fact all rehearse dilemmas about the form of society itself. (Jameson 1996: 161)

In Ireland, matters of divorce, adoption, contraception and abortion, have cohered sexual doctrines with non-sexual meanings revolving above all around salvation. Salvation couples narratives of damnation and redemption, as in Genesis with Adam and Eve, and indeed requires a form of damnation. Salvation anew, versus the rubric of patriarchy, must recreate damnation as its rails against the tyranny of the position of the father ruling the signifier through a cultural monopoly elevating and legitimating flesh over the mobility of the signifier (except that is through the patronymic name, an Imaginary version of the Name of the Father).³³ Carr's drama risks damnation anew, to escape the old, ordinary damnation of the position-as-child.

To interrupt the old ways of declaiming over dead bodies (especially female bodies), suicide is literally not the end in *Portia Coughlan* and *The Mai*, for their dead protagonists reappear again after death. Maria Doyle writes in her essay how, "the theatrically animated figure becomes a trace of its own imaginatively extinguished self." (Doyle 2006: 41) A feminine self and mobility is always being imaginatively extinguished, before death, in a father-occluded Imaginary. Their suicide is damnation risked from the Law of the Father and an audience who insist on death, even fictional death, as the end to a fictional character. Carr's drama demands a further suspension of disbelief (a disbelief in death as death of the flesh). Carr reanimates the flesh and the voice of her protagonists as if they are not separate. This act of reanimation is meant to reanimate the judgement of the audience, by listening to the voice of the dead and look on the real 'flesh' of a voice, or a body's desire, and desire itself.

Feminism, for Carr is not delimited by universal suffrage and consensus but by sublimity, or becoming the *non-appareil* of an individual following his or her own desire. Carr's feminine is not attuned to the discretion of the well-spoken crowd of realist novels, "whose badge of truth is their crasure of all the traces of enunciation". (Copjec 1993: 50) Carr directs the audience to imagine and create the traces of enunciation foreboding death in these reanimated bodies, and this may be termed a feminine superego, one asking for the inclusion, instead of exclusion, of difference as a lasting matter of kindness (versus difference as exceptional difference in the masculine superego).

³³ As in Milton's poem, patriarchal flesh still moves at will.

Higonnet argues suicide is a frame which constructs an image that "deliberately fragments, reduces, and reorients a scene, rather than trying to capture it in its entirety". (Higonnet 2000: 229) To integrate an act of suicide into a closed hermeneutic is to reinvigorate the old frame of society suicide seeks to shatter.

In the end we had the pieces of the puzzle, but no matter how we put them together, gaps remained, oddly shaped emptinesses mapped by what surrounded them, like countries we couldn't name.

(*The Virgin Suicides*; Eugenides 1993: 246)

The suicide is a country which properly cannot, and perhaps should not, be mapped and named (by judgement, or summation in meaning). This is an appeal for understanding and pity, like Estragon's call in *Godot*. As Anthony Roche writes, "Marina Carr acknowledges the possibility for women that their condition of 'desperation' may never be expressed or dramatically represented at all." (Roche 1995: 288) Carr's fractured images of Irish womanhood and childhood may be considered revolutionary acts of suicide, akin to those in the fiction of Toni Morrison. As Ryan discusses for Morrison's fiction, there are revolutionary possibilities inherent in suicide, in the "unsaying, in the unliving, and in the mutinous refusal to forget". (Ryan 2000: 407) By the action of returning *The Mai* and *Portia Coughlan* to the stage, the revolutionary energies of the characters cannot be so easily recouped in the older patriarchal frame, hovering to reclaim them with transcendental metaphors. From being in the loveless position-as-child, the passage of the body through death is refused a transcendental meaning, and the characters of *The Mai*, *Portia*, and *Hester*, risk becoming the unloved, forever. Damnation is risked to begin salvation anew, but the salvation cannot be said, it only must be listened for. So it is, Carr mutinies against both dramatic and religious sanctimonies by refusing to let the audience romantically forget, by bringing *The Mai* and *Portia* on stage again, defying death with a displaced, but insistently returning voice.

The three women seem without guilt, or as one commentator in the *Irish Times* said of Carr's female characters, most of their aspirations "do not fit easily in the context of Irish cultural norms." (cited Wallace 2001: 434) Women, in the context of Irish cultural norms, *should* deflect their desire, voluntarily, to accede to that of the father via motherhood - the singular, prescribed pleasurable outlet after being captured in the Imaginary position-as-child is the release when desire accords with the position of the father. The only relation these women can find with the Law, maintaining their integrity, is by death, and there are

no last words. Carr does not romanticise the connection between the individual, the Law, and death.

Carr avoids a romantic feminism in that what is private to the lives of The Mai, Hester and Portia, goes with them to the grave. The truly private is like death, it is

in the strong sense the structurally secluded; like the Unconscious, it will not be made public as such, it is systematically dysfunctional.

(Readings 1995: 26-7)

Instead of masculinity's preferred exit by exile or martyrdom accompanied by a martyr's last fetishistic speech, an off-stage suicide without words leaves the question of desire even more open.

With the suicides, death *literally* separates the men from the women, and death itself instead of birth becomes a reprise of the Oedipus complex assigning gender roles. This interpellation of gender by suicide clarifies a difference in signification - the only certainty The Mai, Hester and Portia will hold to is death, and in the uncertainty before, there is listening for the one in a thousand chance of true communication, and the chance of love. The men supposed to love these women, are, however, bound over to transmitting the certainties of the Law of the Father. This certainty means no matter what action the men take, the men look on and consider themselves and their own flesh as justified. The women, listening for life, love, or even just conversation surpassing the lifeless certainties of flesh, are dying inside themselves already.

To illustrate the dividing certainty which silently narrates and separates the genders of male and female, compare the fate of Portia Coughlan with Robert (The Mai's cheating husband), and Raphael (Portia's long suffering husband), with The Mai. Portia and Robert may be characterised as self-indulgent adulterers, with rather narcissistic obsessions. Raphael and The Mai are their respective long-suffering spouses, building a splendid home for their partners and children only for their partners to spurn it all. Both Raphael and The Mai are heavily 'castrated' figures, anxious to excel and prosper. Yet the two sets of characters have radically different fates.

Both men walk away in disgust from their wives with self-righteous, self-pitying and self-justified satisfaction. In startling contrast, the two women whose behaviour mirrors the men in another play, commit suicide by drowning themselves in waters swirling with myth

(Owl Lake and the Belmont River). One deadly element is this profound, feminine suggestibility to myth. Grandma Fraochlán, Ellen (The Mai's mother), and The Mai herself, each of them is an "awful dreamer," as Agnes (The Mai's aunt) says of Ellen (Carr 1999: 183).

At the end of Act One, Robert brings on stage the drowned body of The Mai, and Millie, before the lights go down, like a figure from a Greek chorus, addresses the audience,

I recall the legend of Owl Lake. I knew that story as a child. So did The Mai and Robert. But we were unaffected by it and in our blindness moved along with it like sleepwalkers along a precipice and all around gods and mortals called out for us to change our course and, not listening, we walked on and on.
(Carr 1999: 148)

The Mai and Portia both were immersed in deadly myth, blinding, deafening myth, long before they drown in water. At the same time the two men instead live out a Calvinist myth of predestined election. The two men believe in their "irresistible grace." When Grandma Fraochlán accuses Robert of intending to desert The Mai, she rails at a futility in life, at inevitability: "sure as I'm sittin' here, you'll not be stopping long, because we repeat and we repeat, the orchestration may be different but the tune is always the same." (Carr 1999: 122) The characters may be different, but the myth remains the same.

In the company of men and their irresistible self-justification (a quality shared by Gabriel, Portia's twin), the women bare blind and deaf to the danger of their situation. For the two men, in the presence of women, there can no trial of themselves (a different situation from Friel).

At their crux, relations between men and women indicate a manifest destiny, and yes, even a colonial certainty and bigotry amongst the men against the women.³⁴ Men are assigned life and salvation (in their own personal edicts), and women are assigned death and damnation. Carr's protagonists finally live out their desire, and it is the desire of the Other, that is, the hidden death drive of masculine sexuation which in the end is the only manner in which the women are recognised as women, when they die for something the men will not, the signifier. Carr's plays are as dark as this.

³⁴ As discussed for Edna O'Brien, men require to denigrate (Jacqueline Rose's term) women for their own Symbolic consistency, and 'negritude' is a word with a racist genealogy.

Compare the difference between the exhausted suicides of the Carr's trilogy and with sexuation in *Low in the Dark*. In these 'naturalistic' plays, the men and the women *also* never meet, and never can meet, and worse, will never meet, by the myths which engender their separation into the damned and the elect.³⁵

Both *The Mai* and *Portia* are decried as tinkers by Robert and Raphael - being accused of being a tinker, or being a tinker, is the operative (conscious) paternal metaphor for this (conscious and unconscious) damnation of women (mother versus whore has been reinvented by quiet and biddable versus trash). The white female subject by virtue of her gender experiences what is arguably a racist militancy against self-expression, either for being public and normative (*The Mai*), or public and transgressive (*Hester*, *Portia*). Unless the women remain out of sight of a father-occluded Imaginary, it is damned if they do (*The Mai*), and damned if they don't (*Hester*, *Portia*). As Suzanna Chan writes

Ireland's 2004 Referendum on Citizenship, which sought to exclude Ireland's non-white immigrants and reproduced national identity through gendered discourses of whiteness, highlights the need for feminist cultural critics to interrogate the hegemonic conflation of the categories 'white' and Irish.

(Chan 2007: 1)

With an unavowable, unconscious underpinning, patriarchal men reserve an unspoken, even neo-colonial rule over women, couched in racist terms such as 'tinker'.

Though *Portia* has an anti-authoritarian streak, and the physical and sexual bravado of a man, this is blended with a terrible vulnerability. *Portia* rags one lover, *Damus*, "Thought I'd take you out of the slime but it's still dripping off ya." (Carr 1999: 203). Another lover, *Fintan*, is called a "turnip head.. a fuckin' cloddhopper". (Carr 1999: 219) Yet *Portia* remonstrates with her mother how she is always reading the

subtext, Mother, words dropped be accident, phrases covered over, sentences unfinished, and I know the topography of your mind as well as well as I know every inch and ditch and drain of Belmont Farm. (Carr 1999: 210)

Portia, like *The Mai* and *Hester*, feels she is the one who is truly civilised in demanding a hearing, as well as in this great, fastidious listening she provides others. The women are the

³⁵ Consider Carr's remarks on the *Witch* and *Time* at the chapter opening. The doctrine of the elect by refusing *Time*, refuses love, and refusing love, refuses sexuation. Sexuation is corruption in Calvinist mythology - this is the myth fought in Carr's drama. If "Death is dead because *Time* is dead", Carr is willing the death of patriarchal *Death*, and the resurrection of the *Witch*.

ones who insist on a feminine mobility linked to discovering the signifier as the true value of life, sexuality, and individuality. The women are, ironically, the only ones to see how to, in a father-occluded Imaginary, recognise the other, by a signifier.

Melissa Sihra grasps the grace of their fate as the women choose to suffer it, death.

The representation of death in Carr's play needs to be considered in terms of performance. Death on stage does not indicate finality but *movement*; it is a poetic drive to excavate what it means to live. The plays cannot offer transformative possibility if they are reduced to the literal, where death is regarded in terms of plot rather than poetics. (Sihra 2003: 28, italics mine)

Portia, Hester and The Mai are all as capable of occupying the position of the father as the position of the child. However they must 'suffer' to disguise their ability and mobility with ironic detachment - for instance, Portia, in blasé conversation with Fintan, Damon and Stacia. No-one around them has the imagination to recognise any of the joy, ennui and then final suffering of the women, when the position of the father refuses to recognise suffering not confessing to its authority. Submission to the 'irresistible grace' of the biologically male father position is the passport out of ironical suffering. The women will not default on their own graces, but face a life of suffering passed in irony, and what is eternal irony, except the deepest form of neglect and cruelty? Portia, The Mai and Hester are all expected to get over their lack of recognition as potential, able incumbents in the position of the father, and re-position themselves as children in the presence of men. Otherwise, they are ignored and cursed with silence (silence is the name-of-the-father's curse in a father-occluded Imaginary).

At the finish of *Portia Coughlan* Raphael ignores Portia, and admits to being silent for thirteen years waiting for Portia to explain and confess her incestuous passion for Gabriel. This translates into the monopoly of the father over damnation, redemption and salvation. The abjection of the feminine element (by the father), is the defeat of her own voice and authority by a father's eternal silence if necessary (the immobile father in heaven). Raphael claims the position of the father's prerogative of 'innocent silence' for *thirteen years* in the matter of Portia's love for Gabriel, so as to nullify his own desire, or lack.³⁶ Portia says to Raphael, "May have wanted more to do with ya if ya weren't always so calm and unneedy, Raphael - Never learnt how to deal with that." (Carr 1999: 253) Perhaps Raphael does

³⁶ A similar right to silence as defence against lack occupies the sideline of *Happy Days*, with Willie, who prayed worship courting Winnie. But then, as Winnie complains, "nothing from that day forth only titbits from *Reynolds' News*." (Beckett 1990: 167)

sexually desire Portia, and cares, or perhaps not. But his closing hymn of love to Portia, "I prayed to God to let me have ya, I showered ya with everythin' I thought a woman could want" - sounds just histrionic enough to be interpreted as more, disguised punishment of Portia in some nostalgic mode to disguise his own lack-in-being, and his own lack of love. (Carr 1999: 254) The silence permits Raphael the dream of a masterful, undisturbed, self-righteous and nostalgic father.

Whereas in life, Raphael did little to defend, dissuade or intervene with Portia, or speak to her so as to lead her from harm, including self-harm, in death he is more protective - her dead flesh arouses the Law of the Father. The mastery means, at her death, taking down Portia's body from the crane, acting protectively towards Portia, when both death finally softens Raphael to Portia, and allows him to claim final ownership over her body and person, in private and in public. In any case, Raphael had a pitiless love for Portia. Even a gap of thirteen years suggests the length of 'childhood', and considering how Portia's obsession over Gabriel was never listened to by Raphael, this is Portia as voiceless, this is Portia as *infans*, this is being in the enforced position-as-child as framed by the silence of the father, for thirteen years. The father only responds to his won personal need, waiting for confession, to send a judgement, which is all Raphael does at the end of the play. Would Raphael ever have *asked* Portia what she wanted? Like Baxter and Bone who would rather become like women than talk to women, Raphael would rather claim he loved Portia - "I showered ya with everythin' I thought a woman could want" - than talk to her. Even though Raphael may sound like a woman (his passing concern for running the house, looking after the kids etc.), Raphael refuses to speak to a woman.

As Clare Wallace comments, Robert and Gabriel are "focal points of desire" in the two plays, yet "both men are either physically or emotionally absent." (Wallace 2001: 445). Raphael has had thirteen years to ask Portia how she really feels - and caps this silence with a walkout, stomping 'manfully' away from Portia, providing her death blow. Portia is clearly unstable, perched on a metaphysical ledge, but because it is another man and another past (her brother and her old family), who put her there, Raphael feels justified in ignoring the crisis. This is another version of the 'adoption' refusal, of one man refusing to take on a child from another man. Raphael disowns the history of other men in Portia's life - he must occupy the sole role of legitimate father against all other influences of history. Portia must submerge her past for *his* sake, in the position of the father. In this way, Portia is stuck between two invidious choices, either the position-as-child (for Raphael's sake, supporting the position of the father), or else the pathological option of suicide (which is

only *culturally* pathological, and according to patriarchy, unnatural). There is no path for him accepting and learning to deal with *her* unique and difficult past - his sensitivity (such as complaining about Portia ignoring the children), is only a sensitivity to his own position. Raphael could look after the children himself, or get a childminder, he has free time and they are rich enough, but this too would be 'unnatural'.

All Raphael need do is let Portia have her past (and Portia's memories are obviously full of lies), like a bracelet she could wear, an object which is purely her own (in fact, a symptom of her own), one he can never share, and she may never need share or even know - it could all be a lie, but it would be a fiction of her own (Gabriel is a fiction of her own).

While Raphael and Robert consciously avoid dismissing Portia and The Mai as a "dissolved symptom" in their dominant world, they still wish access to the drowned dead bodies of the women - the women as finally visible "within the field of [their] own deadly desire." (Voela and Tamboukou 2004: 98) Raphael's inability to grant Portia a past of her own (especially its 'symptomatic' shame of incest), sustains Raphael's silence. Portia must abandon her past for his sake, and divest herself of all discourse he cannot access. Women must become the transactional object (part of the position-as-child), since the transactional object forfeits memory, to embody a *tabula rasa* ready to be re-conceived from the position of the father (paternity's legal fiction). As Sylvia Plath averred, "Maybe forgetfulness, like a kind snow, should numb and cover them." (Plath 1988: 250) The transactional object must become amnesiac, a *tabula rasa*. Mothers must be diminished, and unsuitable birthplaces and partners all denigrated. This denigration and erasure is the deadly desire of the patriarchal Law of the Father.

By not confessing and becoming penitent, by not being willing to assuage the position of the father by a suitable, spurious "soul of counsel" (the action demanded in the position-as-child), The Mai, Hester and Portia are condemned. Despair must be addressed by, and to, the position of the father, and despair's legitimate expression, blockage and release (even as it emulates a feminine mobility), made through the father. To fail to turn to the position of the father, and confess (as Foucault argues of modern, European sexuality) to ignore the father, is to be wedded to hysterical isolation and even despair - and to be denied gender as well as sexuality.

If masculine sexuality were not so tied to authority, and repression, especially how "repressing the feminine becomes the occasion" of masculinity itself, then these crises

might not arise. (Shepard 2000: 68) When finally in the last scene Portia does submit to Raphael and confesses over her obsession with Gabriel, Raphael has had enough of being 'castrated' by her refusal to submit. He believes Portia's intention is to position Raphael in the position-as-child, to savage him to the 'scut' (the child), something Raphael is willing to force on Portia without guilt. His pitiless walkout is Raphael's final revenge against Portia for how Portia "savaged [Raphael] to the scut [child], and now ya want love talk". (Carr 1999: 254) Raphael demands Portia assume the position-as-child and shows so, transferring the desire to Portia.

Raphael finds it unbearable to disguise his need to know what exactly went on between Portia and Gabriel. Asking Portia 'wid submission' is for him a perilous insult to his hidden, insufferable, monstrous pride. In an interview with Patti Hartigan, Carr remarked how, "In a lot of plays, the women are ciphers... I try to give the man articulation to express their depths and their contradictions". (Hartigan cited Doyle 2006: 44) The masculine position may disguise a need to know, but finally always maintains a need to know. Joan Copjec elucidates on the paradox of the 'masculine' superego,

The prohibition proper to the superego renders something unsayable and undoable, to be sure, but it does not say *what* we should not say or do; it merely imposes a limit that makes everything we do and say seem as nought compared to what we cannot. (Copjec 1994: 236)

The patriarchal masculine superego is an unspoken process of attenuation, a war of attrition predicated on an indefinite taboo (of killing the father), a faithful silence in the unsayable for the sake of a father's mastery, and forcing the speech of others into finding the desire of the father.³⁷

See, see, your silence,
Cunning in dumbness, in my weakness draws
My soul of counsel from me.
(*Troilus and Cressida* Act 3.2: 128-30)

The more savage the superego in its representative, the greater the stamina for such attrition, such as Raphael's thirteen years of silence, watching Portia suffer. His silence is another version of the 'diamond insult' Raphael provides for Portia on her birthday, a vulgarly expensive gem Portia finds an insensitive insult (Raphael virtually throws it at Portia, and says to insure it). Raphael's silence is cold, hard, glittering and highly valuable

³⁷ Such as in Carleton's *Going to Maynooth* - the family must locate the father's desire for the father.

to him, like a diamond. The hardness of the gem is the hardness of the man's heart, and the hardness of his silence. The heart, according to the men in *Low in the Dark*, is not up to such powerful feelings - this also was the limit of the masculine superego, trapping gender in the Imaginary and annihilating sexuality at the same time. This diamond silence represents masculinity, a representation he throws in her face. This silence may lie at the heart of even an apparently liberal patriarchy, the stamina of a superego by the end drawing the soul of counsel from the other, to marshal the margins of controlling its own access to the Law of the Father. Suicide is the final cry against this action, the work of death insisting on the beyond of the signifier.

Lacan compared Antigone with the analyst for actualising desire - "the whole analytic experience is no more than an invitation to the revelation of desire." (Lacan 1999a: 221) Portia Coughlan is akin to Antigone. Both women insist on an act of mourning which disrupts the patriarchal role of women in private, temporary mourning, mourning whereby women represent "the invisible medium through whom the phallus passes". (Bergoffen 1998: 144)³⁸ Without this mediation there can be no transference of patriarchal power. Mourning by women had secured for them an

appropriate syntax in the Symbolic, and with it, the establishment of objects of mediation and intersubjectivity... establishing respectful and amorous relationships between women, a potentially revolutionary move.

(Robinson 2000: 63)³⁹

Public mourning was one means of sharing access with women to the Law of the Father - female keeners are an exemplary practice - though these patterns of behaviour are attenuated now in patriarchal dispositions both to private death and feminine passivity. Therefore, Portia's undue mourning is an hiatus in the transfer of this power - how Portia insists on remaining in mourning may be exactly so as to exercise, in public, all the vices and virtues of possessing the phallus and the patriarchal Law of the father and with that, the freedom of social acts accrued around patriarchal power. For instance, Portia likes 'fucking' as well as loving, and fucking to see if the other is any good, and not for affection (as with the barman).

³⁸ Bergoffen builds a convincing argument around Gertrude's role in *Hamlet*, where the work of mourning is done by Hamlet instead of Gertrude, leading to Hamlet's hystericisation.

³⁹ It would be two women, Ellen Mary Downing and Mary Anne Kelly, who in Thomas Davis's *the Nation* would write "the Famine *caoineadh*, the legendary lament for the dead.. among only a few poets who applied this ancient Celtic lament to the Famine." (Parr 2006: 29)

The interruption of the transference of power by failing to pass over a transactional object representing the phallus is one manoeuvre of Carr's protagonists. Hester will not pass on her child (as phallus) to Carthage, The Mai will not sign over her house (as phallus) to Robert, and Portia remains mourning over the dead flesh of a lost, even falsified love. Child, house and brother are all pieces of Imaginary flesh a patriarch demands in his charge. Portia's love for Gabriel, Hester for Josie, and The Mai for her house, is their own assignable access to the phallus and to *jouissance*.

Carr's multiple strategies of developing the notion of destiny and the inevitable, all have some ontological dimension, and in every case reveal a lack which is amended through simulation - illusion, fantasy, false memory, story.

(Wallace 2003: 63)

Finally, the women make children, houses, or brothers their destiny, if it is a fictional destiny, so they can assert control over their own fate, and are willing to pay any price to maintain the pleasure of the fiction, even death.

I wish now to return to *Low in the Dark* and consider a relevance this early drama might have for Carr's trilogy. Roche argues,

Curtains does not undergo the physical confinement to which Beckett subjects his women characters, increasingly paralysed as to mobility and strapped into various contraptions. Curtains still has and indeed enjoys the greatest physical autonomy of all, experiencing an orgasm which we register through her breathing and movement rather than through any overt visual sign. (Roche 1995: 287-288)

Curtains may orgasm and have a very physical existence, but in Curtain's narrative, the final story is how the man and the woman never meet, "and worse still... they never can and they never will." (Carr 1999: 99) In this story, having never met, gender is still to take place. The greatest autonomy of all will become the creation of gender through narrative and signification, but it is still to happen.

In *Low in the Dark*, the lovers heading towards one another are not walking on a path to love, but a path to the toilets. Toilets are segregated into male and female, never to meet in a joint toilet. Subjects go to the toilet, one by one, through a segregation of our bodies by a conventional signification using 'Gents' and 'Ladies', according to Imaginary, biological considerations. Therefore, the man and the woman *should* never meet, and never meeting is the epitome of parallelism, or Imaginary being. Curtains seeks to make the others understand this confusion, of how

Long after it was over, the man and the woman realised that not only had they never met north by north east or south by southwest, much worse, they had never met. And worse still, they never would, they never could, they never can and they never will. (Carr 1999: 99)

Carr's directions are clear, with Curtains sitting on the toilet seat saying, "So the man and the woman walked... So the man and the woman..." waiting for Binder and Bender to continue. (Carr 1999: 73) If actual love risks a confusion of gender (the mobility between father and child positions), and the confusion of gender (entering the other gender's toilets) is 'dirty' and obscene, then Curtains is dirty, and her covering is to hide her fantasmatic dirt. "No harm in a bit of dirt" is how Curtains puts it. (Carr 1999: 49) Hence Curtains, confusing the purity of sentimental gender and love narratives, must get ritually beaten by the others.

As the normative product of a romance structured as an arrangement of two toilets, the child is fantasmatically and literally 'shit' into existence in two different places, one marked male and the other marked female, and hence the marked, political reason in *Low in the Dark* for literally 'throwing' children away. This is the position-as-child for excrement.

There is a post-colonial undertow. Ashcroft writes of how the child is the "colonial abject", and how

It is in its precarious existence somewhere between the subject and object of the parental gaze that the child seems to represent the crisis of abjection... the central concept of colonial abjection is *cannibalism* - the absolute sign of the other in imperial thought. (Ashcroft 2001: 45)

The coloniser effectively constructs the figure of the child and sentimentalises it, for when the coloniser cannibalises the body of the native culture, the colonial image of the child is now ready-made so as to both make useful, mask and contain the excreted remnants of native culture, all the while occluding the horrors of violence and dispossession of the land, horrors only described as proper chastisement and education. The work of Marina Carr is an interruption and abandonment of the position-as-child as the container of patriarchal, colonialism's excreta, of what patriarchy and colonialism refuse to absorb (the signifier at the position of the child).

The child, the supposed result of the love between a man and a woman, is actually derived from an unconscious, toilet-structured determination of gender that blocks love. Bender speaks of herself and a paramour lying in bed, "like two corpses, horrified at our

immobility." (Carr 1999: 95)⁴⁰ This immobility is the blockage of gender and love together, and the anal regressive, Imaginary production of the dead, repetitive, excreta of the position-as-child.

Dead, it only shams being alive because, living, it shammed being dead.
Doubly dead, simultaneously real and sham: the cadaver plays at being what it
is... Death through resemblance. (Hollier 1988: 77)

Carr's women, and particularly mothers, abject the poverty of love, "the watery love" as Portia calls it, offered to the position-as-child. (Carr 1999: 222) Perhaps it is only possible that a female Irish dramatist and mother could construct so much drama around abjecting the position-as-child.

However, *Curtains* does not stop her narrative at this point. Though there may be no sexual relationship, its lack is still constitutive. Romance may in our culture be a toilet-structured narrative, where 'a man is a man' and 'a woman is a woman,' and men and women never meet, yet the story goes on, like the need for the toilet.

Curtains at the end begins the romance narrative yet again, testing to find if the four other characters will finally recognise this failure among themselves. The lack of a relationship is not the finish. Lack is not death for the subject, but the presence of desire, and *Curtains*, in the position of the child, may be considered an embodiment of desire. From being drowned in sentimentality, the position of the child rises from the dead. The 'fatal excess' in Carr is the excess of the position of the child, risking anew damnation for salvation, an excess intolerable to and intolerant of, the confines of the father's position in patriarchy.

Maria Doyle's consideration in her essay of the 're-animated' body in Carr, should point us towards *Frankenstein*, and Carr as a Mary Shelley-like writer, born to a woman who dies in the act of becoming a mother, by birthing a female writer. This mother is 'Mother Ireland'.

⁴⁰ There is a comparable, and pivotal moment of blockage in Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916). Stephen Dedalus chooses to mortify his senses, including touch, by practising immobility: "He never consciously changed his position in bed..." (Joyce 1977: 137) Since bed is the site of marital conjoining, and hence, apparently, the proving of gender, Dedalus's (hysterical) anxiety at changing positions in bed is over changing gender. Later, Cranly asks, "*Can excrement or a child or a louse be a work of art?*" (Joyce 1977: 194) Louse takes up the place of 'penis' in the Freudian phallic triangle of penis, excrement, and child. There is an hysterical self-loathing coursing in the text, and mastering it is Dedalus's narcissistic, and spiteful, ideal of the artist-academic.

Barbara Johnson considers how "there may perhaps be meaningful parallels between Victor's creation of his monster and Mary's creation of her book." (Johnson 1987: 150) Carr's creation of these 'monstrous' demanding women has a meaningful parallel with female authorship in Irish drama. Carr, like Shelley, knows fully "that for women as well as for men the home can be the very site of the *unheimlich*." (Johnson 1987: 154), and Carr, like Shelley, may have had the

impulse to write... [and] the desire to search for the secret of animation...
[from] the same seemingly trivial circumstances: the necessity of finding
something to read on a rainy day. (Johnson 1987: 155)

The circumstances of being a woman and a child are no longer trivial in Carr's drama - the bodies and speech of children and women are reanimated and rise above the surface of the Imaginary, on Carr's stage. Carr dares to exaggerate and perpetuate the tension and attraction between being a woman or child, or a woman and child, rather than palliating the gap between them, and she dares to say romance, as it is, is like sitting on a toilet seat.

To sum up by returning to the opening remarks, of all the pleasure and pains mapped out by Carr amidst a crisis of Irish society, the most controversial aspect of Carr's theatre lies with incest. In many plays, almost every alliance is plagued with overtones of, if not actual, incestuous desire. Modernism's endemic self-reflexivity has been described as a canvas for incestuous desire, and incest's self-reference and self-reflexivity as forms of self-love and masturbation carrying "the taint of taboo and potential insanity" (Elkins 2000: 153). This may even be why critics occasionally are dismayed by Carr – they transfer the text's incestuous and masturbatory pleasures to the author's ego. There is a certainly a Romantic streak and verve in Carr, but this criticism is misdirected.

Incest is clearly a central, threatening theme in Carr's drama, a theme so prevalent as to enact the horror not only that incest lies beneath most relations but that "union is incest." (Elkins 2000: 152) If union becomes incest and each Symbolic relation is unconsciously marked by the incest taboo (in a society characterised by a terrible taboo of incest), the Symbolic is threatened with foreclosure, generating a normative tendency to psychosis.⁴¹ The threat of psychosis arises from the insistence on what is beyond the Imaginary as only the taboo of Oedipus and incest.

⁴¹ This is part of the generation of an over-promoted, father-occluded Imaginary - that the Symbolic is loaded with psychosis (when the Symbolic actually saves from psychosis). Joyce uniquely held these two forces in tandem, of a father-occluded Imaginary threatened all the time

Carr's dramas map out a "territory of corrupted relationships in which an atmosphere of foreclosure is conjured through genealogy." (Wallace 2003: 62) The expression of this psychotic threat may help account for what has been labelled the "furies of Irish fiction" (O'Faolin 1997).⁴² Marina Carr's as well as Martin McDonagh's edge-ignoring dramas interrogate the threat of psychosis in Irish drama and society, and that society's containment in either colonial or Catholic bio-politics and a father-occluded Imaginary, with its awful containment principle of tabloid-neo-conservative-damnation.⁴³

Every union being incest brings psychosis or madness - a threat underlying Carr's protagonist's suicides, and the murderous, comic banalities of McDonagh's anti-heroes. But this threat and these suicides cannot be made to cohere in any complete (Imaginary) message. This is crucial - neither author speaks of the threat or death in a way to complement the position of the father. Neither validates the position of the father as the singular, proleptic path to *jouissance* and sexuation.

In *On Raftery's Hill*, Carr critiques the old mode of bio-politics which was founded on the denial of infantile sexuality - Sorrel takes both pleasure and pain in the incest. The 'unsayable' of incest in the old mode of bio-politics was created around a taboo on infantile sexuality *in the presence of the father*. Carr's writing does not include incest and 'infantile sexuality' for a critique of a *father's* mal-adapted identity (therefore reinforcing the old mode of power). The traditional prohibition on incest is kept alive via newer ways of speaking of incest always hysterically addressed to the position of the father and the father's identity, whereby questions and anger are focussed on screaming - Who is this man who can commit such a crime? This is the mode of addressing incest and paedophilia Fintan O'Toole rightly castigates, for it is done to always supplement a new and more secure position of the father while maintaining the bar over infantile sexuality (and the barred position of the child in a father-occluded Imaginary). Marina Carr's theatre has been called an

with psychosis. In the Joycean imagination, the signifier becomes the animating image of the unconscious.

⁴² Julia O'Faolain's essay, "The Furies of Irish Fiction", in *The Richmond Review*, available online, <http://www.richmondreview.co.uk/library/ofaola01.html> [accessed 12th June 2007].

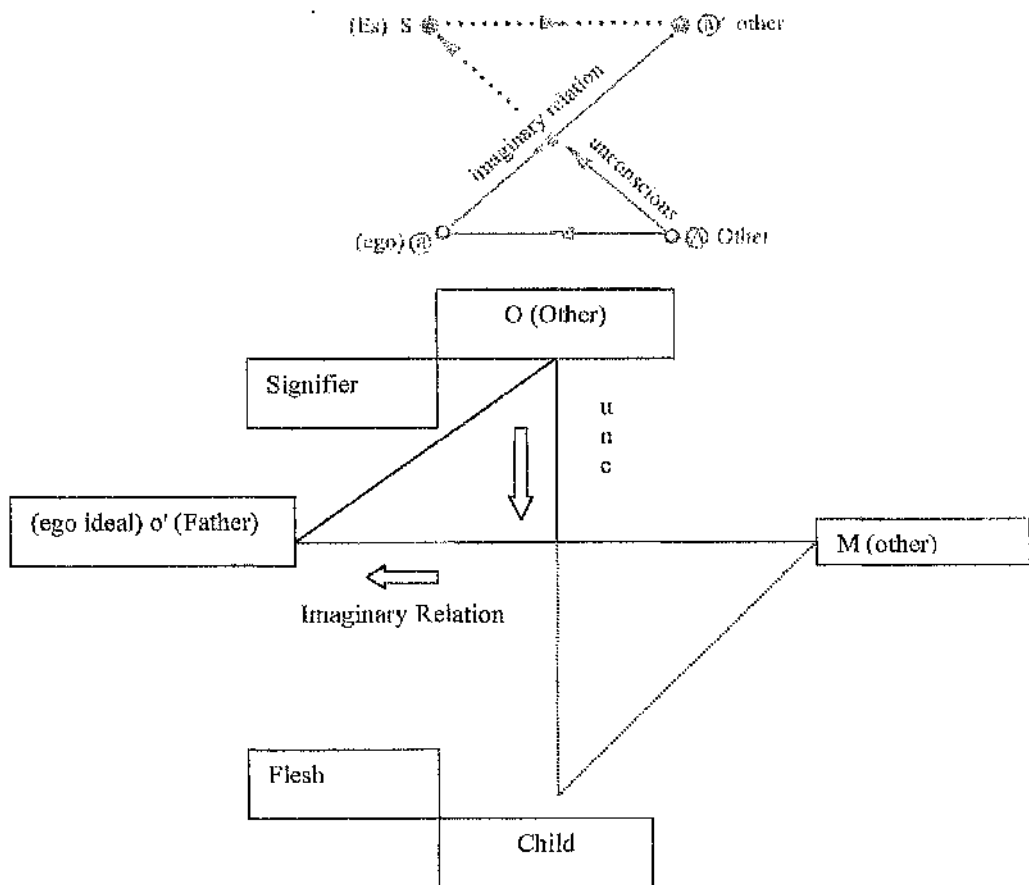
⁴³ Phallic *jouissance* and mobility takes extreme pleasure in knowing of and going to 'the edge', dallying with crossing the border of an edge - an Imaginary trait, even at the exceptional crossing point. Feminine *jouissance* and mobility takes extreme pleasure in not knowing where the edge even is, only that an edge might be somewhere - a Symbolic trait. McDonagh delights in dallying and deriding the Law of the Father for pleasure: "Sure you can't be asking me to go chopping up me own son, now!" (*The Lieutenant of Inishmore*; McDonagh 2001: 66) McDonagh likes to lose sight of any edge.

Orphic Theatre where she journeys to an underworld of repressed and uncomfortable individual or collective, psychic and corporeal trauma and brings back strange and disturbing songs. (McMullan 2000: 4)

With the mostly positive reception of her drama in Ireland and elsewhere, the mode of biopolitics and colonial justice secured through the position-as-child may hopefully be withering away in such strange, and disturbing, songs.

Appendix B - Figures and Movements

Figure One Movements - Schema L to the Child, Sin, Purgatory, and Famine



Propositions

1. The position of the child is defined and excluded from the mother - father relationship by the incest taboo. (Van Pelt 2000: 78)
2. The phallus takes part in the subjective economy governed by the unconscious, "evoked only by what we call a metaphor, in particular, the paternal metaphor." (Lacan 1999c: 198)
3. The position-as-child is defined by the agency of the father as the father practices and dominates the paternal metaphor.
4. The position-as-child is reflected in the Imaginary (the Mirror Stage, the horizontal line) and deliberately excluded entry in the Symbolic except at the behest of patriarchal paternal metaphors.
5. The position-as-child is defined and excluded by the Imaginary 'wall of learning' comprising ontological and technical knowledge. Patriarchal pedagogy exists to both define and exclude the child till the child has identified sufficiently with the metaphorical constellation of knowledge associated with the position of the father.

6. The father's name is the dominant image and metaphor in the Imaginary. This is the basis of a father-occluded Imaginary.
7. The stronger the father-occluded Imaginary, the more reflective the horizontal line of the Imaginary relation and the more distance in fantasy between the child and the signifier, the more alienated the child from desire, the more the position of the child becomes the position-as-child.
8. The Law of the Father places flesh on the signifier.
9. The logic defining the position-as-child is exclusionary - the child is blocked from encountering the signifier and desire in the Symbolic. The patriarchal position of the father moderates the child's entry, the mother normalises the child's exclusion. The mother's sexual exclusion under the Oedipus taboo for the male child *doubly* intensifies both the male child's exclusion from the Symbolic and its identification with the position of the father in the Imaginary, since what normalises the male child's exclusion from desire, the mother, is also excluded by sexual taboo.
10. This metonymic displacement of desire itself by the veiled action of an Oedipal taboo is discussed in the Introduction - the political manifestation and utility is to repress desire and block access to the Law for those in the position-as-child, meaning the native, the dispossessed, or the feminine.
11. The mother becomes a veil (phallus) over desire, veiling the position of the father as if the position of the father is where desire might be encountered (the position of the father is made to resemble *objet a* in the uniperversity of patriarchy). Therefore, the Oedipus complex as framed in vulgar Freudianism itself becomes the intensifying engine of a father-occluded Imaginary - a source of its modern popularity.
12. The position-as-child position is constructed as to (perversely) fetishise the Law of the Father for completing the child and the Other (completeness, or idealism, is a metaphor of All).
13. The patriarchal paternal metaphor yields a redundant metonymy in the family romance, producing a superior, more royal or improved father. The family romance fantasy then both breaks (questioning the original father) and intensifies (installs a superior father) the Law of the Father. As Jardine warns, "Is there a way to move out of the Family Romance without a certain existential feminism turning men into our mothers? without revalorising the phallic mother?" (Jardine 1985: 130)
14. The Law of Desire removes flesh from the signifier.
15. Other paternities may exist in the child's fantasy.
16. Other possible, metonymic paternities (spirits, stones or animist), are excluded, repressed for 'illegal' and 'illogical' fictions of 'occultism'.
17. Animist belief instead exalts a material, transferable, fetish object in which the Law is consecrated.
18. Metonymy in patriarchy is turned into a metaphor for a counterfeit paternity, or 'illegal' or illogical fictions. No counterfeits are allowed and coincidence is suspect (such as routinely for feminine *jouissance*). Coincidence is coin-cide, or the killing of the coin, the coin standing in for the good father of capitalist patriarchy. Coincidence must be monitored carefully, not to be hiding a counterfeit operation.
19. With a baby's vocalisation, "when the child does not 'want' to say anything more than 'I am speaking'", a carer may be too ready to shut down meaning by either affirming or denying the carer's own constructed meaning over the child's speech, or else, when by hastening "to satisfy the orality with a bottle, she then corks up the meaning." (Mélèse 2002: 77) Either way, projecting meaning or silencing the infant with need or demand inferred by the adult, the adult blocks the child's desire.

20. This Lacanian adapted model of flesh-and-signifier is part another rehearsal of the body-and-soul debate. Aristotle's discussion of body and soul in *De Anima* (*On the Soul*), also is very involved with issues of mobility (for instance, Book I, section II and Book III, section X-XI), and Lacan often is proto-Aristotelian (such as for the his concepts of *tuché* and the *automaton*). Aristotle's soul can indeed resemble the signifier, for instance, "voice is the sound produced by a creature with soul" (Book II, section VIII). (Aristotle 1935: 115)
21. Perhaps the most influential, Christian 'author' of the Law of the Father is Aquinas (c. 1225–1274), in *Summa Theologica* (1265–1274). To avoid God as cause of sin, Aquinas argued in *Question LXXXIII First Article*, "original sin is not in the soul, but in the flesh." (Aquinas 1945: 679)
22. Lacan makes the point through Kierkegaard, "The father, the Name-of-the-Father, sustains the structure of desire with the structure of the law - but the inheritance of the father is that which Kierkegaard designates for us, namely, his sin." (Lacan 1998: 34) While the *Name* of the Father sustains a structure, the written *inheritance* of the Law of the Father becomes sinful in the Christian tradition.
23. For God, the author of the Word, to be sinless, Man must make and author sin, and hence Man must make and author flesh - authoring flesh is the Law of the Father. Women have as much access to the Law of the Father as men, and more, through their fertility.
24. Patriarchy displaces an unavoidable and unpayable debt men owe to women as mothers by making masculine authorship transcendent and responsible for good and ill - the fundamental rule of patriarchy. Adam was punished for Eve's 'sin'.
25. This divine debt to women is occluded in a father-occluded Imaginary whereby masculine authorship dominates the Law of the Father - compulsory heterosexuality, a masculine caste of priests, and rites of marriage develop the theme.
26. Compulsory heterosexuality, or compulsory straightness, is a doctrine of parallelism, or equally, apartheid. Parallelism conditions and develops change by processes of inversion, where the parallel lines switch over, if there is change. Flipping between lines is made difficult and even unnatural. Parallelism is innately conservative - stable, social positions goes on forever, like parallel lines. This 'forever' is the basis of 'essentialism', or eternally enduring qualities at any position. However, this conservatism means change requires violence. Parallelism is a source of violence as change is crisis to the parallel structure itself.
27. The mirror is the parallel structure par excellence.
28. In a father-occluded Imaginary with parallelism as its structure, only the position of the father is enabled to cross between lines, and is the only medium of crossover.
29. The conflation of flesh and sin as divine debt is what Purgatory admonishes and capitalism developed through colonial agents. The medieval invention of Purgatory and modernity's invention of childhood were two way of creating and controlling debt, (Catholic) debt to God and (Protestant) debt to Nature, in an expanding capitalist economy dominated first by Church and then colonial architectures. Childhood is a colonial reinvention of Purgatory, and methods for enslavement.
30. In his book *Hamlet in Purgatory*, Greenblatt speaks of how the monks "who launched the story [of Purgatory] were not propounding a doctrine; they were shaping and colonising the imagination" (Greenblatt 2001: 85). Like childhood, Purgatory's invention reveals a historical example of "the process by which philosophical abstractions, institutional ambitions, and inchoate fears acquire a local habitation and a name." (Greenblatt 2001: 86)
31. Purgatory certainly became an Imaginary religious-political prison enabling profitable control of adherents to the faith, and those in the position-as-child can resemble purgatorial ghosts of modernity forced to adhere to the bourgeois family as the new faith centre of modernity (instead of the Church). Secularism inverted time so that

death occurs at birth, childhood is a form of purgatory, and adulthood the remnant of Heaven. The position-as-child is a form of political prison - Magdalene centres in Ireland were a form of political prison.

32. In patriarchal society, a childhood without a legitimate father was and often still is, made to feel like Purgatory. The institutional care of illegitimate children shouts out, Purgatory is dead, long live Purgatory! Purgatory is blockage of access to the father (Catholic, medieval, God) position, secular childhood is blockage of access to the father (Protestant, modern, colonial, God) position.
33. The evidence for this division is how the discourse on infantile sexuality and its exception, masturbation, arose in the Protestant, northern European countries. While Catholic colonial practices were based on slavery and forced conversion of natives to Catholicism (conversion then controlled by sin and the threat of Purgatory), Protestant practice was theoretically challenged by, and abandoned slavery, in its validation of individual rights. The Protestant, colonial control mechanism was by the construction of childhood.
34. Spain, Portugal, France and England, with easy access to the Atlantic, constructed competing overseas empires. Ireland was England's weak flank in its colonial expansion. Ireland blocked uninhibited access to the colonies - an independent Ireland was potentially like Purgatory to the English, accessing the Heaven of the colonies. Ireland must be subject to and controlled through discourses of infantilisation.
35. Greenblatt reconsiders the history and meaning of St. Patrick's Purgatory, the original pilgrimage at Lough Derg with an abbey-enclosed hole or cave reputed to have Purgatory inside. This Irish site of Purgatory became "one of the most important pilgrimage sites of the Middle Ages, attracting penitents many of whom were drawn by the belief - tenacious in spite of official attempts to modify it - that a person who entered his place would have no other Purgatory." (Greenblatt 2001: 93) The site was destroyed on orders of the Pope in 1497, after a Dutch Augustinian "complained to the pope of being lowered on a rope into a pit, of seeing no visions, and of being deluded by the local clergy for financial gain" (Kelly 1991: 381). The complaint of commercialisation overrunning the sacred is of course similar to the complaints affecting contemporary childhood.
36. In his essay, "*On the Sexual Production of Subjectivity*" (1996), Jameson, following Brown (1988), conjectures how the medieval Church switched its central dogmatic proscription away from a lust for land towards proscribing a lust for the body (theorised by Augustine), only whenever the Church had consolidated its ideological dominance over the land of Europe (Jameson 1996: 173-174). In such a conjecture, the landless, liminal zone of Purgatory was invented alongside a repressed sexuality to mystify the Church's riches and possession of land. My own conjecture is a similar manoeuvre was repeated by colonialism using the child and infantile sexuality as a means for correctly managing, maintaining and mystifying its violent control over wealth and land.
37. "What is the autocratic nature of colonial rule in Ireland or India, Edmund Burke suggested, but absolutism in disguise, the superseded tyranny of the Middle Ages re-appearing in modern form?" (Gibbons 2004: 23) Purgatory is trauma, a Church doctrine invented and controlled by a priestly caste, inspiring debt to God, regulated by theology. Childhood is trauma, a secular doctrine invented and controlled by a colonial caste, inspiring debt to parental colonists, regulated by Oedipal, bio-power.
38. This is why the position-as-child is one of lovelessness, from its Purgatorial inheritance. Being inherited from Purgatory, men must severely test and denigrate even those they love in the position-as-child. Like Aquinas, the patriarchal masculine subject must above all uphold the Law of the Father, and punish desire in the flesh, but this is to *occlude the violence of holding the land*.
39. This is also why the position-as-child can be one of a liminal lawlessness - neither the law of Man nor the law of God is fully incarnated there. The only law is the unknowable tally of all the stored sin-as-debt from the past. A colonised inheritance, and an inherited debt of deflected desire marks the post-colonial. In Ireland, this inherited debt

of guilt is deepened from the Famine. Colonialism and famine were traumas, but how the trauma is transmitted *and re-transmitted* is crucial to any recovery.

40. "After the Treaty the search for respectability displaced revolutionary enthusiasm; imitation drove out imagination; the solemn trappings of familiar institutions enveloped and began to stifle the iconoclasts." (Fitzpatrick cited Benton 1995: 166) The post-colonial trajectory is the moment of release from Purgatory, the rush of Heaven and full responsibility for the state and government law. The stereotype, as the subject without responsibility, can in theory be left behind. However, the inertia of Purgatory (its stereotypes and deflected desires), where the soul-signifier lived so long, survives on. The cultural legacy of a colonised past lived on in an untraceable criminality pervading the air of post-colonial freedom even as the legal and cultural programme to "Restore the imprisoned nation to itself" is advanced. (Said 1993: 259) Or, the post-colonial social contract retains many colonial infractions (see Chapter 6).
41. "It is this historical phase, this history of mixed identity, this resurfacing of the figurative and of fragments of preceding forms as constituent of the ground that perhaps is most threatening to the architectural project" of the post-colonial nation and its cultural edifice. (Lozanovska 2003: 254) A politics of "containment" is one response to a figural (or allegorised) and fragmented (colonised) past. See Smith (2004), describing how Irish Catholic, containment procedures are directed most at containing a projected violence, unruliness and 'original sin', on those in the position-as-child. All the deflected desire of a colonised past is projected onto women and children in the position-as-child, and indeed, it is women and children who are made constantly to deflect their desire to maintain the position of the father.
42. The more intense the guilt of a colonised past, the more intense the containment of the position-as-child. The Catholic Church projected and transmitted this guilt by serving the cults of Purgatory, the child and biological fertility. Fertility was one way of paying off the debt of sin to the father. Punishing the flesh of women and children is one way of paying an inherited debt - patriarchy projects debt onto children and women.
43. Melancholy is an expression of lawlessness as the loss of the signifier.
44. "State-oriented nationalisms respond to this paralysing sense of loss therapeutically by seeking to constitute a new culture and subjecthood around a reinvention of tradition... in the shadow of nationalism, as of colonialism, there lurk, we might say, melancholy survivals." (Lloyd 2000: 219)
45. Ongoing melancholy arises from the enduring functioning of stereotypes, or an enduring loss of responsibility even after national 'liberation'. This is how the traumatised can be positioned as a child in bourgeois culture afterwards - the trauma victim does suffer a loss of responsibility, since real changes after contact with the Real. As the liberal, Romantic child is not held to full responsibility, the trauma victim in that culture 'fits' with a child position. This is not by any means a necessary, or helpful, never mind therapeutic connection.
46. War as a policy of a cannibal Imaginary had been used in Ireland since the end of the sixteenth century. War functions as useful trauma.
47. Contemporary 'Anglo-liberalism' is a 'mindless' globalisation of a father-occluded Imaginary - the US and UK triumphantly espouse their equal-opportunity, multi-culturalism while waging a racist, war. Dead Iraqi bodies are not counted, or more accurately, are counted for nothing. Death belongs to the Symbolic, but War is the dominant mode of conflict in the father-occluded Imaginary, which at the same time occludes Death as it wages War. Such a society refuses to understand what War means - Death for the many - hiding body bags of dead soldiers in an Imaginary of idealised War. The violence of holding the land, or the oil underneath, is occluded. Return to footnote 18.
48. "The husbandman must first break the land, before it be made capable of good seed: and when it is thoroughly broken and manured, if he do not forthwith cast good seed into it, it will grow wild again, and bear nothing but weeds. So a barbarous country must be first broken by a war, before it will be capable of good government."

Sir John Davies (*A Discovery of the True Causes why Ireland was never entirely Subdued*, 1612)

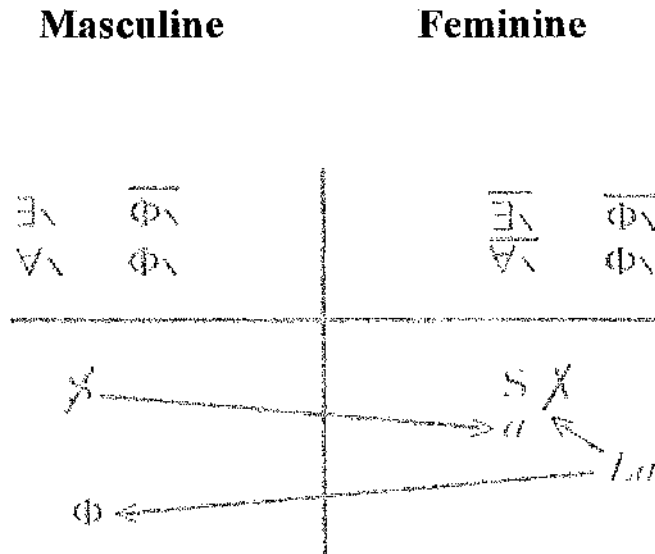
In other words, the Law of the Father had not been violent enough yet - war is the answer.

49. 'Unspeakable' traumas are often couched in terms of a traumatic break in the divisions of private and public, as Kelleher compellingly shows in *The Feminisation of Famine* (1997). After the Famine, a prohibited movement of the private into the public - mothers could not feed their children and begged with them in public, near naked woman in distress appeared in public, the dead were unburied and left 'out' in homes and on the road - is itself made to construct, prove and rationalise in middle-class terms the trauma of the famine, while the middle-class itself approved of the Famine as Providence. Bourgeois culture invented its own 'private' as an instrument of class and racial conflict.
50. Belsey importantly points out how trauma 'victims' are not necessarily aggressive. (Belsey 2005: 56) A liminal lawlessness is not necessarily aggressive (Friel being a dramatist who will not shock is exemplary in this regard, even after the trauma of the Troubles). Traumatized subjects are however, profoundly hystericalised (symptomatically, there is a loss of gesture, or repetitive gestures such as tics, cough, laughs), and by that deep level of hysteria, become suggestible and imitative. Return to footnote 32.
51. Hysterics are easily drawn into Imaginary mirror structures - but this is not in itself a sign of the Real - the Real is not, as Žižek claims, "an entity of pure semblance." (Žižek 1999: 302, italics in original) What takes place in *The Black Doctor* is how Foster comes along with a book of romance, and a mirror of the flesh to attach to the romance. None of these desires and objects are the Real per se. The Real is reconstructed again, but it is not a semblance of Foster's book and mirror, though it is still structured by them.
52. The difference between triadic structure and dyadic mirrors is crucial. Mirror structures - including parallelism and chiasmus - are dyadic. The paradoxes and impossibilities of parallelism are where parallel lines meet - but in the Real, parallel lines can meet everywhere - and that 'everywhere' is the basis of the Symbolic Other and metonymy, or a non-dialectical phallus. Žižek's idealism is to always dialecticise the phallus (his Hegelianism), and that, simply, is not a necessity. The operation introduces yet another denuded Symbolic, driven by Žižek's own Hegelian, phallic logic and *jouissance*. Deconstruction is another denuded Symbolic, this time using a Derridean logic of *différance* on the phallus. Return to footnote 21.
53. Equivalently, though recognition begins with the metaphor of the 'I' as the master signifier in the Mirror Stage, not all subsequent recognition need be metaphoric. Though recognition begins with Oedipal and Imaginary recognition, not all subsequent recognition need be Oedipal and Imaginary. Mirror phase recognition begins vertically, but that need not continue.
54. Oedipal Imaginary metaphors are a block on discourses of equality. Metonymic tropes of potential equality are under theorised due to the prevalence of vertical Oedipal tropes.
55. Carleton's *Phelim O'Toole's Courtship* has a non-dialecticised phallus - how the priest, the housekeeper and Phelim, all three of them in collision, might suddenly all access the position of the father is a comic instance of a non-dialectical operation of the phallus. At their comic 'collision', it is impossible to determine who might be the mother, father, or child. The comedy is Oedipal, metonymic, and Symbolic, instead of the Oedipal, metaphoric and Imaginary comedy of *Going to Maynooth*.
56. Žižek constructs a Lacan-occluded Imaginary. Derrida constructs a Derrida-occluded Imaginary. What is noteworthy is the desire in academia for (male-constructed) Imaginaries, or the romance of knowledge.

57. After the trauma to the body, Famine trauma was reinscribed imagistically to determine and control subsequent traffic between cultural constructions of the 'private' and 'public', so as to maximise pain for the victims as pain is distinguished in a middle-class Imaginary. Victims 'successfully' exposed to such images *must* subsequently turn and succeed in a middle-class Imaginary and denuded Symbolic for any successful recovery process.
58. An overdetermined reinscription of trauma is a critical function of colonial ideology in the aftermath of traumas such as war and famine, traumas colonialism itself has caused and then uses as an opportunity to manage desire. Trauma is a tactical opportunity for reinscribing the Imaginary of the other so long as the means of production are dominated by colonial or middle-class interests, when a traumatised population can be re-interpellated mainly by images. Proselytising during the Famine is one such well-known instance. The same practice is taking place in Africa with the AIDS crisis.
59. The cult of images in a father-occluded Imaginary has its highest utility factor in colonialism, images are effective most of all, and very strategic, when the colonialist is by definition unwilling to learn and engage with the language of the native.
60. The trauma of the Famine has retroactively been framed by an act of historicisation and a mode of containment which enforces the structures of desire (fantasies) of the very class who applauded the Famine as Providence. The cult of Mother Ireland can be interpreted as a specific defence and control over Famine trauma framed *in this particular way*. Mother Ireland heals and consolidates the private and public.
61. During the Famine, London newspapers shouted at outrageous Irish ingratitude, such as *The Times*, 30th August 1848: "In no other country have the people been so liberally and unthrifly helped by the nation they denounced and defied, and in none have they repeated more humble and piteous supplications to those whom they have previously repaid with monstrous gratitude." (cited Porter and O'Hearn 1995: 142) Return to Footnote 40.
62. The Famine was a Purgatory. The Irish were positioned as monstrous children. Such terms of abuse *following* the Famine participate in, continue, deepen and construct the trauma on favoured terms.
63. Purgatory and childhood for those in the position-as-child are favoured zones of church or tabloid rectitude, while the terms occlude the historical conditions of suffering, and possession of land. The rectitude is concerned with re-transmitting trauma and keeping trauma in currency, on its own definitive terms. Marina Carr breaks these terms.
64. In Tom Murphy's *Famine* (1967), the death by starvation of a young girl prefigures the death of a much larger body of people in the Famine. The use of female flesh to symbolise death only supplements a father-occluded Imaginary, and in Murphy's play at the finish, a father kills his wife and son to end their suffering. A father's position, and *desire*, is left intact. The play suggests child-sacrifice is mercy, but such child-sacrifice is mercy to desire at the position of the father. The prohibition on child sacrifice only serves to reinforce the 'humanity' of the father, and his overweening authority over flesh.
65. The question of trauma is supremely delicate in the interplay between resistance, repetition, transference and possible redemption - see Nobus (2000: 117-122) for a discussion. There simply must be a position of the father, for social norms. However, the timing of repetition should be attended with care - why now, and here?
66. In terms of what can be hoped for the future after trauma, Lloyd considers how "a non-therapeutic relation to the past, structured around the notion of survival or living on rather than recovery, is what should guide our critique of modernity and ground a different mode of historicisation." (Lloyd 2000: 219-220) Lloyd also warns of the danger of making any analogy between "individual trauma and recovery and a socio-historical curing, [and] a distinctly developmental narrative." (Lloyd 2000: 221) Therapy all too often serves mostly the desire of the position of the father. Return to note 22

67. The bourgeois construction of the meaning of trauma among those in the position-as-child serves to contain the trauma in private, preferably in the unconscious. Since the position-as-child is without affirmed access or right to the private, with only a public position yet without a public voice (see the Introduction), the intensity of trauma may last and last in silence afterwards.
68. Compromising the ideological divisions controlling the traffic between private and public - the Trap of Imaginary Traps whereby the position-as-child is controlled from, as he or she develops only after an Oedipal trauma - may offer not only a means of survival, but a means of recovery, confidence and joy at continuing life.
69. Trauma is suggestible and has a fundamental stake in the signifier - the power and reality of signifying beings - the signifier can save as well as terrify, as the soul can save or terrify.
70. There have been a number of Famine memorials in Ireland and abroad. Margaret Keller's essay, *Hunger and history: monuments to the Great Irish Famine*, is an excellent discussion of what the Famine *can* and *might* mean. Kelleher surveys the meanings, hopes, anxieties, and controversies Famine memorials have aroused. Roy Foster has excoriated the upsurge in interest - "driven by the idea that some sort of empathy could be achieved... The language of popular psycho-therapy replaced that of historical analysis." (cited Kelleher 2002: 250)
71. Such prevarications would be unthinkable in terms of other traumas, such as the Nazi Holocaust.
72. Kelleher discusses Ricoeur's essay *Memory and Forgetting* (1999), and Ricoeur's framing of a 'duty to tell', a 'duty to remember', and a 'duty to forget', the latter of which is not amnesia, but an institution of amnesty. (Kelleher 2000: 253-254; Ricoeur 1999: 7-11)
73. It is possible to consider the famine sculpture in front of the International Financial Services Centre, Dublin, as paying testament to an alignment of trauma and both guilt and redemption. When the neo-liberal economics of the Famine era are now felt to be under Irish control, the Irish state address the Famine in public memoriam - the placement and timing of the memoriam, after such a long silence, say far more than its sentimental form. The Three Jolly Travellers in Carleton's *The Black Doctor* and the famine memorial in front of The International Financial Services Centre share an historical trauma. Whether it is guilty or redemptive transference can not be known, for the nation or individual. However, at least the Famine is being addressed in public.
74. Who can say when Purgatory or trauma end?

(Lacan 1999b: 78)



One - Necessity (Order)	An - Impossibility
Many - Possible (Worlds)	Infinite - Contingent

1. The masculine side posits that there is difference (through the phallus), and that under the action of the phallus, one difference is as good as another. That is, all difference is rendered similar, except around one mythic signifier, the Name of the Father.
2. The left side is dominated by possibility and necessity - necessity is the Imaginary 'Trap' for potential difference and / or the signifier - it is necessary to trap the signifier (rein in metonymy) for signification (the annihilating metaphor) to occur. This movement is the basis of the Law of the Father, adding flesh and annihilating the signifier. Addition generally is an annihilation of the signifier - counting is a metaphor belonging to the Law of the Father.
3. On the masculine side phallic *jouissance* is made *possible* by a paternal metaphor of similarity between "All" Symbolic difference, that *necessitates* the exception, the Name of the Father, for ordering the basis of this general equivalence between 'All' difference - it is necessary to be able to imaginatively count 'All' difference to be assured a calibration is *possible* so as the Name of the Father exists. The "phallic function coincides with its own self-limitation, with the setting up of a non-phallic exception." (Zizek 1995) Necessity is an idealisation of difference - ideals, including reason, idealise difference.
4. In the discourse surrounding phallic *jouissance*, the Name of the Father is configured into names-of-the-father, a local "nomination of the excess called primordial father". (Zizek 1995) The names-of-the-father act *like* an Imaginary phallus not only calibrating and

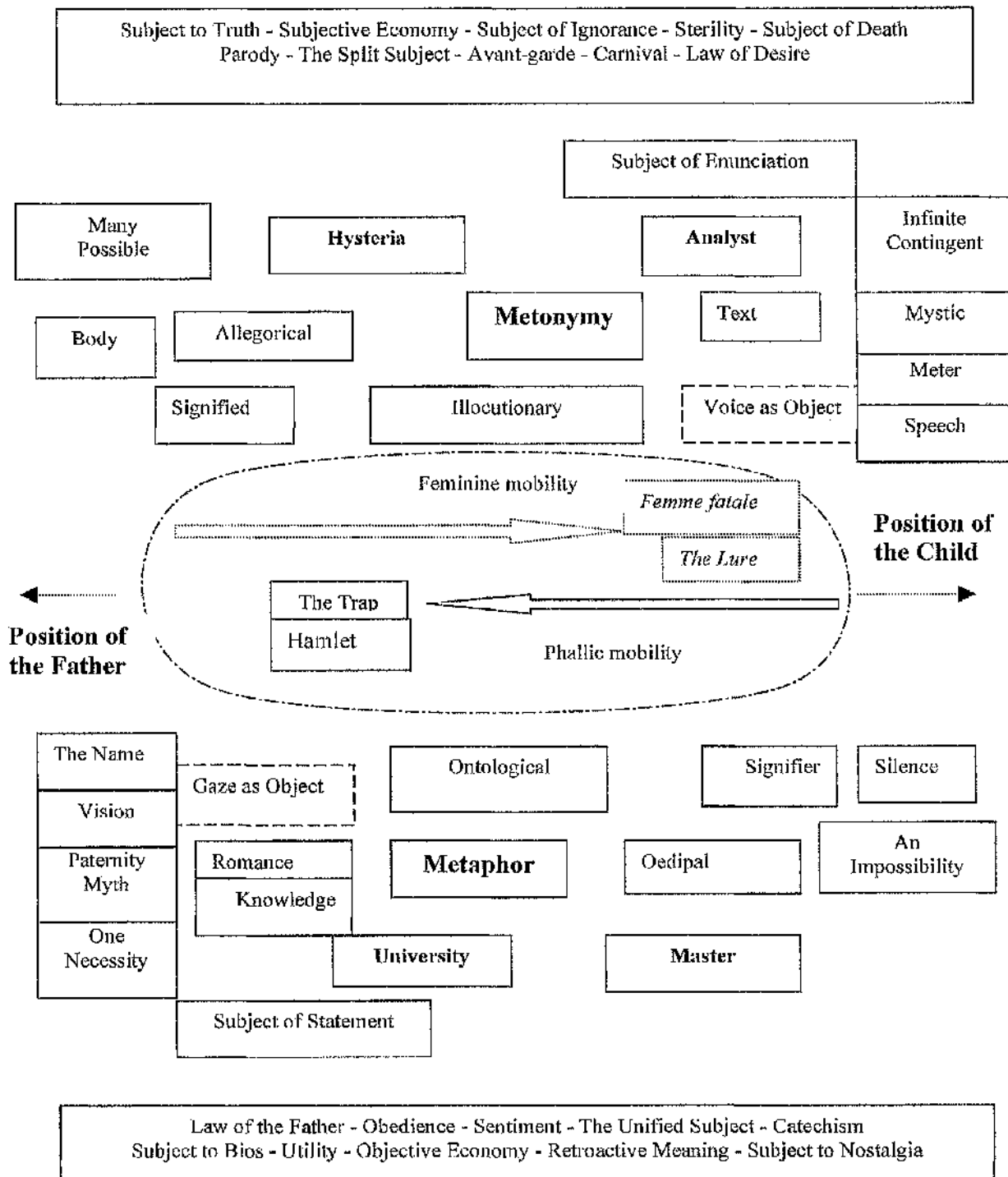
reducing difference, but calibrating signifiers. Great names appear, of persons, knowledge and ideals. This is the basis for a father-occluded Imaginary.

5. In a father-occluded Imaginary the figure of the father being like the phallus (the signifier of signifiers) is not subject to signification and so resembles an unsplit, unified subject. The father is One body, without ignorance (the ideal subject of the law), with no need to speak.
6. In a father-occluded Imaginary, the function of the father when most demanded in the position of the father is not to speak. The primordial father is utterly silent. The desire of other subjects becomes, in retrospect, his desire. Perfect silence is a fantasy supplementing the desire of the father. The subject who breaks this mythic silence without finding the father's desire is a feminised 'blasphemer'. Silence is the punishment or curse of the patriarchal father - those who listen to this silence, without taking part and finding the father's desire, are exiled. Phelim O'Toole does not hear the silent 'curse' of the English patriarchal father-judge, lies in his presence by his own desire, and is exiled through transportation.
7. In a father-occluded Imaginary, there is no thought without movement, no movement without thought.
8. The feminine side also posits there is difference among signifiers (through the phallus), but then there is *nothing* more to be said in general about this difference. Difference between signifiers on the feminine side is *contingent* on enunciation, and uniquely specified by the subject - this is the 'not-All' condition of femininity. There is no (Imaginary) counting of signifiers on the feminine side, since enunciation (which can never be idealised) moves the signifier out of the realm of finite, countable possibilities. However, if contingency is entire, if contingency is "All" there is, we resort to an inverted phallicism and communication is impossible, and instead of silence, there is only noise (noisy, impossible chaos is a name-of-the-father). To order the basis of feminine contingency, the feminine side introduces at least one 'impossible' element to permit communication within this infinite set of differences, or the not- not-All. That is, though there is no exception to this contingency, at least one element exists, without description or knowledge, and impossible to know. Feminine *jouissance* charts a possibility for encountering at least one, perhaps decidable or undecidable difference, of which nothing may be said or known, but which *can be said* (versus deconstruction's definitely undecidable difference).
9. The contingency and impossibility of knowledge of feminine *jouissance* is reason why the feminine subject is 'immersed' in the Symbolic, why feminine *jouissance* is *jouissance* of the Other, and Woman is the Other sex. Woman as the Other sex does not imply either the biological female or male, only it being not-All, or "not-whole", with respect to phallic *jouissance*, or not predicated on exceptionalism. Feminine *jouissance* is a play upon "neither the one, nor the other", a "game of the unknown that leads nowhere and, therefore, opens the way to say something that could be symbolised". (Mélèse 2002: 77)
10. A feminism declaring the female sex as exceptional from men, is following a phallic logic.
11. The calibration of phallic *jouissance* provides the possibility of 'the' as definite article for the masculine subject, whereas the undecidability of feminine *jouissance* means the indefinite article for the feminine subject, or 'Woman does not exist' (Lacan 1999b: 80)
12. Phallic *jouissance* occurs at the intersection of the Real and the Symbolic. (Evans 1996: 18; Ragland 2004: 9, 94, 114) Return to footnote 11.
13. Phallic *jouissance* refracted through desire takes recourse most in the Imaginary register, where phallic *jouissance* lacks.
14. This is the most important and crucial ideal of the thesis as far as Lacan is used, of how the Symbolic Name and names of the father, when used, produced and expressed in language for phallic *jouissance*, begin to have the currency of an image in the Imaginary.
15. This is the basis of how the Name and names of the father, in a culture dominated by masculine pleasure and phallic *jouissance*, generate a father-occluded Imaginary, or a

denuded Symbolic. A denuded Symbolic is the *result* of language use and hence culture dominantly made for the production of phallic *jouissance*. For being so directed by phallic mobility, the mainstay version of heterosexuality "has always been a veiled homosexuality, one modality of desire, one libidinal economy." (Gallop 1982: 127)

16. The culture given over to phallic *jouissance* follows a logic of exclusion and exceptionalism. Such a culture is set to normalise a belief in Manifest Destiny, or the exception among nations. Such a culture is ready to assume colonial rule as its destiny.
17. "Whatever is part of the realm of images cannot be broken down by reason [logic, knowledge] and must remain images under penalty of destroying themselves." (Artaud 1999: 167) This describes both the violence and conservatism of a father-occluded Imaginary.
18. The Imaginary is "centred and born in the body, and developed via the image of the body and the bodily ego. This field of lived, human experience nourishes but also obscures the symbolic. Language, by contrast, has a relational and abstract structure that seems by traditional definitions nonhuman, albeit not necessarily inhuman. However, the more radically the imaginary is symbolised, and the human element thereby reduced, the more purely formal and numerical aspects of the symbolic can come to be foregrounded. Human relations can then become mere calculations for a maximisation of production and money, in which everyone is assigned a statistical, numerical, or economic value. In such an act of symbolisation, love, hate, and ignorance of the human other, the great passions of the imaginary, can come to be ignored. Thus, whereas the pure Imaginary may produce crimes of passion, the Symbolic is capable of massive crimes of inhumanity." (Jaanus 1996: 326)
19. A father-occluded Imaginary drives the absorption of the Symbolic into the rationality of the Real, when the more purely formal and numerical aspects of the Symbolic come to be foregrounded. Capitalism and totalitarian politics dispense such formalisations of the Symbolic in treatises on the market and history. Gambling is a rudimentary formalisation of the market.
20. Feminine *jouissance* at the intersection of the Symbolic and Imaginary lacks most the Real - feminine *jouissance* aims at the *objet a* but misses- hence how it can be both representable, when it is in the Symbolic somewhere in the language of the text, and how it is unrepresentable, since it cannot be identified. It is present in the gaps of Symbolic signification, and also in the gaps of the Imaginary body, such, perhaps, as how in my own imagination, Winnie's feminine *jouissance* in *Happy Days* floats up into the sky. Any *objet a* found depends on a reader.
21. Maternal *jouissance* is at the kernel of trauma. Maternal *jouissance* may be the loss, encounter, or creation of an *objet a*.
22. Maternal *jouissance* is at the intersection of the Real and Imaginary. (Ragland 2004: 9, 94, 114) This is the *jouissance* dominating the Mirror Phase. With the introduction of the signifier and hence desire and language, lack is introduced, and what is lacking from maternal *jouissance* is most of all the Symbolic. Therefore, maternal *jouissance* (often labelled Real *jouissance*), articulated in language and refracted by desire, takes recourse most in the Symbolic. This is illustrated in Carleton's *The Black Doctor*, where language as information and money as symbolic signage can overwhelm the consciousness of men in *The Three Jolly Travellers*, and why a female presence is unbearable, either in its 'good' form (Mrs. Foster and Miss Stammers), or its bad form (the impoverished flower girl).

Figure Three Movements - The Position of the Child to the Position of the Father



Propositions

Mobility, Gender, and the Law - Traps and Lures

1. Phallic mobility moves the subject from the position of the child towards the position of the father. Phallic mobility symptomatically creates Imaginary Traps for the other. Phallic mobility masks the voice, placing flesh on the signifier. Hamlet is its named symbol. Phallic *jouissance* is on the left hand side and either does or more often acts as if 'it' comes from a position of mastery and analysis. Phallic *jouissance* may, and often does, have *nothing* of the master in its discourse except the (biological or conventional) *appearance of the master*. The latter figure is called the over-promoted father of a father-occluded Imaginary.
2. Phallic mobility adds flesh to the signifier. In the ontology of the lower half, becoming is a memory affirming the individual and community. Death is overcome by the memorial.
3. Mythic death stimulates the masculine subject's phallic mobility and conditioned proleptic accession to the father position. "If the figure of the dead father survives only by virtue of the fact that one does not tell the truth of which he is unaware, what, then, is to be said of the *I*, on which this survival depends? He did not know... A little more and he'd have known. Oh! let's hope that never happens! Rather than have him know, I'd die. Yes, that how I get there, there where it was: who knew, then, that I was dead? Being of non-being, that is how I as subject comes on the scene... by a discourse in which it is death that sustains existence." (Lacan 1999c: 300)
4. Feminine mobility moves the subject from the position of the father towards the position of the child. The *femme fatale* is its nameless symbol, deluding the Imaginary (naming) Traps of the Father. The *femme fatale* upholds the voice as object Lure. Feminine mobility reveals the voice, removing flesh from the signifier. Feminine *jouissance* is on the right side and does and can move towards actual potential mastery and analysis. This mastery and analysis must be disavowed by children and women in patriarchy, even by their feigning a lack of mastery and analysis. This is part why the disingenuous yet 'innocent and clever' child who would speak only by the knowledge and ontology (Imaginary master signifiers) of the paternal father, while refraining from questions of desire and the Symbolic signifier.
5. Feminine mobility removes flesh from the signifier. In the ontology of the upper half, "Becoming is an antimemory". (Deleuze & Guattari 1988: 294) Memory (rituals, memorial, the native's calendar) is crucial to steal from the colonised. "The colonised seems condemned to lose his memory." (Memmi 1965: 103) The colonised are exiled to the upper half awaiting colonial processing (pedagogical, cultural, even sporting) and interpellation in the coloniser's master signifiers, moving from right to left and down.
6. The feminine subject 'knows' of castration, and this means the process of revisiting castration is different for the masculine and feminine positions. Whereas for the masculine position the visit is anxious, defending an uncastrated Imaginary subjectivity through neurotic denial (as if castration is death), the feminine position, revisiting a castration that has been there from the start, enables the subject "to realise that the fantasy that leads us to fear the retaliation of the law was merely an artefact that is ultimately devoid of meaning." (Guervich 1999) The feminine intimates how castration is as universal and variable as language, and not merely the presence or absence of the flesh of the penis (*the* paternal metaphor for castration).
7. The Law is composed of the Law of the Father and the Law of Desire - both are necessary, for order and mutability. Without the Imaginary position of the father there can be no desire. Without the Symbolic position of the child there can be no flesh. The Real mediates the dialectic.
8. The Law of the Father, in the lower half - that which puts flesh on the signifier - is already a metaphor for the signifier as a hidden, skeletal structure. The Law of Desire, in the upper half - that which removes flesh from the signifier - is already metonymic, with the signifier standing in for flesh.

9. The Law of the Father communicates names and (Imaginary) names-of-the-father.
10. The Law of Desire communicates desire and 'speech' and the (Symbolic) Name of the Father
11. Local 'law' communicates the local name-of-the-father.
12. Governmental laws are scripts of Imaginary Traps with a transgressive lure built in, i.e. the law knows how it can, should and must be broken, in advance. This is part of the phallic function. The phallic function has an All-to-One correspondence. Any law just needs one transgression to enact itself - there is One body of law to All subjects. Each subject needs to know All law - there is no excuse in ignorance.
13. The Imaginary signified becomes a Trap for the voice, and the Symbolic's signifier a Lure for the gaze. "Sexual behaviour is quite especially prone to the lure." (Lacan 1988a: 123) Sexuality resides in the Symbolic.
14. By the patriarchal version of the paternal metaphor, the voice as Lure is consistently converted into presence with the flesh as its Trap, the basis of phallogocentrism.
15. When a Trap is the same as a Lure, the two can be straight. But a Trap may have nothing in it, while a Lure may be nothing at all, and then the two can be queer.

The Image

16. "Whatever is part of the realm of images cannot be broken down by reason [logic, knowledge] and must remain images under penalty of destroying themselves." (Artaud 1999: 167) The (Imaginary) image has limited mobility, loosening into metonymy (allegory, for instance), or annihilation and rebirth by further metaphor. This is the nature of the Oedipus myth, shouting, the king is dead (annihilated), long live the king! Oedipus is metonymy restricted to the service of metaphor, or equally, a utilitarian attitude to language and truth production, such as the preservation of the monarchy, or in democracy, the sovereign social good (counting is a metaphor, counting to one for monarchy, or counting the many-as-one in democracy). The sublime image is one Imaginary approach for counting as if to the extent of the Symbolic's infinity in the Imaginary Register. In other words, the sublime image is a pictorial Name of the Father, an apparently 'terrible' guarantee of the Imaginary's ability to differentiate beyond the Imaginary object and re-institute the inevitable failure of the Imaginary object into a more interesting form, a pictorial metaphor for an *objet* counting and countering a fear of an 'infinite' mass of shattering size and detail, such as a democratic polis. If Hamlet is the fully-articulated father-occluded Imaginary, the sublime cultural edifice of Hamlet as the one in the many, is its fully-pixelated, jagged, democratic version.
17. In patriarchy, the Imaginary and a denuded Symbolic are structured by two generic Imaginary Traps, based on the biological images of male and female, and conventional gendered, Symbolic associations of masculine and feminine styles of speech.
18. In the drama of Marina Carr, protagonists such as the Mai, Hester, and Portia Coughlan *refuse* to remain an image (of motherhood, Ireland etc.), and suffer the penalty of destroying themselves rather than remaining an image trapped in the father-occluded Imaginary of patriarchal Ireland.

Metaphor and Metonymy

19. The paternal metaphor in patriarchal society engages and restricts desire (limits the frame of desire, or fantasy) to signification within a biological paternal metaphor, creating less and less mobility between the positions of the child and father. This is a 'denuded Symbolic' of 'too, too solid flesh'. (1.2.129) Determinations of the position of the child overdetermined by exhortations of 'the child should be seen and not heard, as

in the discourse of sentimentality, move the position of the child towards being trapped on the left side to the position-as-child - see Figure 4.

20. "In this interval intersecting the signifiers, which forms part of the very structure of the signifier, is the locus of what... I have called metonymy. It is there that what we call desire crawls, slips, escapes, like the ferret. The desire of the Other is apprehended by the subject in that which does not work, in the lacks of the discourse of the Other, and all the child's *whys* reveal not so much an avidity for the reason of things, as a testing of the adult, a *Why are you telling me this?* ever-resuscitated from its base, which is the enigma of the adult's desire." (Lacan 1998: 214)
21. Linguists such as Michael Halliday have defined the term nominalisation as "...the single most powerful resource for creating grammatical metaphor". (Halliday 1994: 352) Marketing enfranchises the discourse of the analyst to devolve mastery through consumer consumption - in capitalism, mobility is conditioned by the imaginary consumption of nouns, or 'brands'.
22. Patriarchy finds frail the unbounded openness of metonymy, or equally, the child finding out the difference between needing and demanding. The child does not simply need to know why are you telling me this, for the sake of knowledge, or demand to know, for the sake of recognition or even love, but to answer the question, why are you talking at all? Patriarchy mitigates against such testing by imposing 'reality' on the social order (knowledge, philosophy etc), demobilizing much of metonymy so as to veil the father behind reality, as if the (Oedipal) paternal metaphor were the phallus.
23. An alibi is a means to defeat metaphor by supplying flesh in another place where the signifier is supposed to be. The nineteenth century Irish were infamous for alibi provision - as in *Phelim O'Toole's Courtship*. Such facility is a sign of not being utterly beholden to the Law of the Father. Phelim is not Trapped either by the voice of conscience, though he is speaking in English, and neither by the dressage (colourful) flesh of the magistrate.
24. The "object of desire, in the usual sense, is either a fantasy that is in reality the *support* of desire, or a lure." (Lacan 1998: 186) An example of the Lure would be Curtains in *Low in the Dark* (1990) by Marina Carr. Curtains in *Low in the Dark* also refers perhaps to *Breath* (1971), which opens and closes with specific directions for opening and closing the curtain written out in full. (Beckett 1990: 371) An act of breathing becomes a Lure.
25. Listening for metonymy followed by a metaphor process enacted by turning looking (light) into guilt (debt), is the patriarchal, paternal metaphor at its god-like purest. Silence - looking - guilty speech is the patriarchal ideal of the paternal metaphor. Desire in patriarchy is held in debt to flesh. The Law of the Father holds the Law of Desire in debt.
26. In the patriarchal paternal metaphor, the voice and gaze as objects order silence and looking into a generalized method for discovering the guilt of a female other. This patriarchal ideal in the gaze has two expressions, one pagan and one Christian. In the Old Testament, Lot's wife looks back at Sodom and Gomorrah, and this look is looked upon by God and met with instant death - compare Hamlet watching Claudius standing up, then Hamlet planning his death. In the Orpheus myth, the same action by Orpheus involving a transgressive looking back, means the death not of Orpheus but of Eurydice. The Old Testament invests control in the woman, and the woman is punished with death for losing control. The Orpheus myth invests control with the man, and still the woman is punished with another death for the man's lack of control (and the man loses the flesh of his 'dead' love again). The *Hamlet* episode seems pagan (a man, Claudius, loses self-control by standing up, and he shall be punished), but first his wife, Gertrude will die, and then also Ophelia. The Hamlet or bourgeois gaze tends to combine the pagan and Christian, something expressed in Carr's drama. If the woman looks awry (Portia or Hester), she dies (the Christian myth), but if the man looks awry (Robert), the woman (The Mai) also dies (the pagan myth) and the man acts as if he has lost his 'dead' love in the flesh (Robert carries her dead body onto the stage). In the bourgeois gaze, men are the elect (*petit* primordial fathers), and women are the damned.

Meaning, the Symbolic, and Fantasy

27. Meaning is not inherent to the signifier and does not "consist" in language but "insists" only in the chain of signification, as one signifier supplants another, metaphorically or metonymically deferring its place in the chain, for "the signifier, by its very nature, always anticipates meaning by unfolding its dimension before it." (Lacan 1999c: 153) Meaning in the chain of signification retrospectively accomplishes the effect of reference in the "Incessant sliding of the signifier under the signifier", with critical *points de capiton* constructing cultural anchor points between the three orders of Symbolic, Imaginary and Real, allowing how the letter and dialogue may affect a "dramatic transformation" in the subject and the subject's body. (Lacan 1999c: 154)
28. "Death is another name for the Symbolic. Symbolic identification is ultimately an identification with death. There is always a relationship in Lacan's work between the Symbolic order and death, for the symbol is death of the thing. This implies an identification with the subject's want-to-be, as deduced from his or her subjective position. Identification with a signifier - the ultimate identification or meaning, after all the Imaginary identifications - is a mortifying identification, which is the only way desire can arise as such, as pure subjective division." (Brousse 1996: 129) Death, associated with lack, the Symbolic and the feminine, may be encapsulated by the figure of the *femme fatale*. Another name for the Imaginary is War.
29. It is "between the signifier in the form of a proper name of a man and the signifier that metaphorically abolishes him that the poetic spark is produced, and it is in this case all the more effective in realising the signification of paternity in that it reproduces the mythical event in terms of which Freud reconstructed the progress, in the unconscious of all men, of the paternal mystery," (Lacan 1999c: 158)
30. "The signifier... represents a subject to another signifier" (Lacan 1999b: 49) This represents the full mobility and freedom of the subject and desire. "The subject is nothing other than what slides in a chain of signifiers, whether he knows which signifier he is the effect of or not." (Lacan 1999b: 50)
31. "The subjective appears in the real insofar as it implies that we have opposite us a subject capable of using the signifier, the play of signifiers. And capable of using it like us - not to signify something but precisely to deceive us over what there is to signify. This is to use the fact that the signifier is something other than meaning in order to present a deceptive signifier." (Lacan 1999c: 186) However, for this deception (or illegitimacy, metonymy, bastardy), women in particular must be *watched* - the patrilinear transfer of kingship, property or title with flesh cannot be vitiated by their deception.
32. "A lack is encountered by the subject in the Other... In the intervals of the discourse of the Other, there emerges in the experience of the child something that is radically mappable, namely, *He is saying this to me, but what does he want?*" (Lacan 1998: 214, italics in original)
33. In the fields of the word, the letter and language, "the imaginary 'being' of the body joins the word of the symbolic to the real of *jouissance* effects, both in the body and in language." (Ragland 1995: 146)
34. "Fantasy is usually conceived as a scenario that realizes the subject's desire. This elementary definition is quite adequate, on condition that we take it literally: what the fantasy stages is not a scene in which our desire is fulfilled [sic], fully satisfied, but on the contrary, a scene that realizes, stages, the desire as such. The fundamental point of psychoanalysis is that desire is not something given in advance, but something that has to be constructed — and it is precisely the role of fantasy to give the coordinates of the subject's desire, to specify its object, *to locate the position the subject assumes in it*. It is only through fantasy that the subject is constituted as desiring: through fantasy we learn how to desire." (Žižek 1992: 6, italics mine) Positionality is crucial to fantasy, and vice versa.

35. "Pretensions to suspend interpretation are 999 times out of 1000 unjustified. And yet, it can happen: once, on rare occasions." (Sollers 1977: 333) Derrida would deny this possibility. Deconstruction is a doctrine of abstinence, a stereotypical uncertainty taking over and renewing sentimentality, being so very sad, and yet, so very improving. Derrida's deconstruction is a renewal of the father-occluded Imaginary, setting the impossibility and infinite contingency of feminine *jouissance* as a rule, making it in fact a Law of the Father - Derrida's obsession with parallelism, names and metaphor is illustrative.
36. The Real in Schema R is located between the Imaginary and Symbolic. However, the design of Figure Three Movements has a left-hand Imaginary and a right-hand Symbolic, but it also has an upper Symbolic and a lower Imaginary. This is, in a minor way, meant to suggest how the Real has a structure - the Real is somewhere - but it is not able to be captured in a mirror, parallel, or Imaginary structure, even and especially how the Real is not some (phallic) exception of a mirror, parallel or Imaginary structure. Žižek's *object a* which resists symbolisation, and Derrida's signifier of *différance*, both have a tendency to be such phallicised exceptions to an Imaginary structure. Žižek likes to structure arguments by a (totalitarian) Ideal-not-Ideal' frame, in Hegelian fashion. Derrida's mirror structure is metaphor-not-metaphor (metonymy). Ideal is still an Ideal, even if it is not a totalitarian Ideal, and metonymy is never simply opposite to metaphor.

Hysteria

37. A block is hysteria made from many little blocks. The blockage not only blocks the signifier and desire, but blocks death - as such, blockage, such as the sublime, is salient for containing the obsessional neurosis of a father-occluded Imaginary.
38. Hysteria in a father-occluded Imaginary dominated by the Law of the Father does not demand the signifier (some negotiation with the Other) but 'blood' sacrifice. Blood acts as a metaphor for the signifier.
39. The hysteric suffers a signifier trapped or blocked from expression, one without metaphor, "a symptom being a metaphor in which flesh or function is taken as a signifying element." (Lacan 1999c: 166) The flesh bears the burden of the signifier's repressed mobility, in hysteria's repetitive fleshy / purely vocalised symptoms that stutter (stuttering is a form of metonymy). The fleshy / vocalised symptoms constitute a form of (hysterical) knowledge contained in the body. The discourse of the analyst listens for and recognises this knowledge, abets the movement of the hysterical symptom into a new master signifier. The hysteric expresses the hysterical (historically based) symptoms of a society's metaphorical foundation, that is, what is excluded by the dominant ideology, or a society's repressed knowledge, in its actual historical fact, not simply as a personal pathology. The hysteric expresses certain but unknown knowledge.
40. "Hysteria designates resistance to social interpellation, to assuming the allotted social identity, it is per definition subversive, whereas perversion is in its structure inherently "constructive" and can easily be put in the service of the existing social order" (Žižek 1996a: note 22)
41. In contrast to the hysteric, the "obsessional neurotic lies in the guise of truth, at the level of factual accuracy, his statements are as a rule true, yet he uses factual accuracy to dissimulate the truth about his desire." (Žižek 1997) "Obsessional neurotics derive satisfaction from an estrangement of / from the Other and perceive complete isolation as the most splendid of life achievements." (Nobus 2000: 44) Denis O'Shaughnessy is an example.

Biology (the science of flesh) made into the Real

42. Biological descent and fertility became all (the 'All') which could evoke the phallus (switching between Symbolic and Imaginary, through the Real), and so, only the fertile is Real. Fertility becomes the sieve of reality. "Repronormativity remains in the closet

even while heteronormativity has stepped more into the light of the theoretical and political day." (Franke 2001: 185) It is still normative to reproduce. In the global warming debates, population control is completely off the agenda. For a discussion, see King and Elliot (1997).

43. Bourgeois patriarchy reduces metonymy to the Oedipal metaphor, through the familial biological line. Irish Catholicism's extreme sensitivity to biological fertility was most clear in the resistance to legalised adoption, long after its acceptance elsewhere in Europe. Anecdotal evidence of an entrenched conservatism among sections of the rural population, from inheritance and land ownership complications, led some to "an instinctive rejection of legalised adoption." (Keating 2003: 170). One rural TD countered to proposals sanctioning adoption that interfering with the line of succession was tantamount to "interfering with the stud." (Whyte cited Keating 2003: 172) Or as one female journalist put it in 1985, "the unmarried mother is still a pariah and her child is still a bastard, because there is only one sin in Ireland and only women can commit it". (cited Ferriter 2004: 723) That sin is betraying the Law of the Father, by placing flesh on the signifier without the consent of a legitimate father.
44. "It is not patriarchal culture, but the biologicistic reduction of the Law of the Dead Father to the rule of the actual, living male that must be struggled against." (Gallop 1975: 24) For instance, in *All That Fall*, Beckett has Maddy Rooney in many ways replace Prospero, only she is more kind and affable.
45. Other non-fertile subjects, including pre-pubescent children, have less part in the Real, are de-subjectivised, and ready to be positioned as objects and not subjects of science. Science exemplifies the mode of Real *jouissance*, "indifferent to the modalities of its symbolization, to the way it will affect social life." (Zizek 1997) For instance, "... not only was no effort made to keep industrial schools children in contact with their families, in fact the direct reverse was the case – those families were often actually broken up and torn apart." (Raftery and O'Sullivan 1999: 315) An *Irish Times* correspondent in 1952 wrote: "Take the case of Artane, the best known of the industrial schools. It holds 800 boys housed in one building. The boys sleep in huge dormitories, their cots spaced mathematically over the inadequate floor space. Their whole life is communal; meals in a huge hall, play in a big concrete waste. Nothing could be further from family life." (cited CICA 2005: 41-42).
46. Those in the position of being non-fertile are liable to being purged from society, either through their invisibility to others, or objectification.
47. In nineteenth century Ireland, "Women who did Trojan work in schooling, in the administration of hospitals and asylums as religious sisters were hardly recognised at all, as was the case with other women who were failing to conform to the dominant stereotype of an appropriate feminine destiny." (McLoughlin 2001: 84)
48. Recent research in Ireland among single, childless women shows how such women still perceive

that they were treated as 'second-class', 'invisible', less important than married sisters and brothers. Their accounts of family life stressed acrimony between siblings, hurtful or demeaning remarks about their singleness or childlessness and important events in the women's own life not celebrated by her family. In response, these women retained only ritual contact with parents and siblings, revealing little about their lives. (Byrne 2003: 454)
49. In Carleton's *The Black Doctor*, the narrative melds a criminal storyline with scientific discourse, a scientific discourse twinning *noir* mélange with maternal (Real) *jouissance* after the trauma of the Famine (see Chapter 2). In the Industrial School in Laffan's story *Flitters*, adults have an amoral, scientific license over children in their care, with no concern how incarceration will affect the child's existing social life. Laffan, like Carleton, imbues the narrative with scientific metaphors. The Commission To Inquire Into Child Abuse (CICA) investigated how three vaccine trials dating from 1960, 1970 and 1973 were conducted on children in care of the state. The Minister for Health in 2000, Micheál Martin TD, raised troubling questions such as "why children in care received experimental vaccines... why were some children outside the normal age for

the administration of the vaccines...[and] why were the records of the trials so inadequate?" (CICA 2003: 212) The trial ethics were to be investigated in consideration of how consent may, or may not, have been obtained. The investigation shutdown in November 2003, when the High Court ruled the Commission's investigation into the trails was beyond the powers granted it by The Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse Act, 2000.

Hamlet

50. Hamlet's "too, too solid flesh" is the Imaginary solidity and immobility of the (over-promoted, restricted to biologically male) patriarchal paternal metaphor dominating his subjectivity (Act 1. Sc.2. 129). Hamlet's reluctance to move away from the patriarchal paternal metaphor is clear when in the same soliloquy he cries out, "frailty, thy name is woman" (Act 1. Sc.2. 146). Hamlet does not wish to publicly remove himself from the confines of the patriarchal paternal metaphor (based on looking as metaphor). Hamlet seeks to expose Claudius *without* being exposed himself. Exposure, or being looked at, is dangerous - this is when Hamlet is also most in the position-as-child, forced to work in a secret society, and when it is a secret society of one, his political ineptness is risible, but entirely secure as an example for those in the position-as-child. See the Introduction.
51. Hamlet frets over the ghost of his father as *femme fatale*, inventing his doom, inviting his damnation. In the first Act, Hamlet conjectures the Ghost may be a "goblin damned" bringing "blasts from hell" (Act 1. Sc. 4, line 21-22), and in Act Two, "the devil" with "power / T'assume a pleasing shape." (Act 2, Sc. 2, line 601-2) A pleasing shape is even part-sexual. The Imaginary Mousetrap is what will save Hamlet from this confusion. Hamlet puts his faith in a father-occluded Imaginary. See Belsey (2002) for a discussion of Hamlet's hysteria.
52. Imaginary Traps ideally superimpose names on the voice. Conscience is an Imaginary idealisation of the voice as an object Trapped in debt to flesh, an Imaginary 'voice' of the Law of the Father.
53. Hamlet, because of his Imaginary debt to the Law of the Father (for giving him flesh), *imagines* it is *possible* and *necessary* for Claudius to react, once his 'guilty' involvement in the paternal metaphor (killing old Hamlet) is *shown* him. Hamlet is sure Claudius will be trapped in the necessity of the Mousetrap's Imaginary gaze.
54. The dumb show, offering the same action as the Mousetrap play, *fails* to provoke Claudius, insinuating Shakespeare's own dramatic awareness of the power of the voice to provoke. As Hawkes argues, "Claudius' failure to respond to the dumb show is not an 'error' or a 'mistake' by Shakespeare" but is there to "reveal what our inherited notions of 'rightness' conceal from us." (Hawkes 2002: 182) This is the moment "we hear the play speak... drama doesn't always work.. the aim of holding a mirror up to nature is not readily achieved" (Hawkes 2002: 189). In line with this, what is revealed is how there is no human reality without the voice, and so, Claudius may well watch a 'mirror', without effect. As discussed in the Introduction, in such a father-occluded Imaginary, *Hamlet* disassembles notions of right and wrong precisely for pitching justice to the presence of an Imaginary voice of conscience. In the reality of a father-occluded Imaginary, those who 'look' innocent, are innocent.
55. The 'Mousetrap play-within-a-play' takes effect in *making visible* Claudius' guilt, when Claudius stands up. The phallic *jouissance* forcing Claudius to stand up (his desire is to confess, to claim the privilege of the primordial father), lies in the intersection between the Real (Claudius body) and the Symbolic (his position as one of the names-of-the-father). This is the most famous example perhaps in Western literature of phallic *jouissance* being revealed in the Imaginary.
56. Hamlet disavows the voice as object by successfully projecting a *femme fatale* voice onto the players of the Mousetrap. Hamlet does not visibly 'suffer' in public being the vocal *femme fatale*, and can maintain in public his allegiance to the paternal metaphor preference for looking. Hamlet insists to the Mousetrap players how they must "Speak the speech, I pray you, as I pronounced it to you - trippingly on the tongue." (3.2.1-2) The 'tripping' voice of the Mousetrap players, not merely their spoken lines (Hamlet

calls them "false fire", 3.2.254), shall figuratively and visibly trip the conscience of the king.

57. Hamlet has poured poison into Claudius' eye, without pouring poison through his own voice. All Hamlet's desire, his 'best' voice, is best expressed in soliloquies, addressed to his own Imaginary other, basically his alter-ego. Hamlet's honeyed, soliloquy-loving voice is left to beguile the audience, as if his voice is perfectly pure. Hamlet's purity of voice enacting itself through Imaginary Traps is the structural basis of Hamlet's disingenuous 'innocence', both to himself and Romantic critics.
58. If "too, too solid flesh" is what Hamlet is burrowing into, Hamlet does discover the signifier. *Hamlet* introduces more new words and coinages than any other Shakespeare play. (Hart 1934: 284) Next is *King Lear*, another play heavily invested in burrowing into the death of the father. Discovering the signifier, Hamlet becomes like the *femme fatale* - Hamlet's repressed status as *femme fatale* is consonant with how Polonius, Ophelia, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern all die without Hamlet looking on them - a sign of the *femme fatale*. A presence in flesh is not required for the *femme fatale* to kill, and in fact, the *femme fatale* should not be present, matching the nothingness of the signifier. However, and this is where Hamlet is a perfect rocking point of patriarchy, Hamlet punishes those who do not punish, meaning those who do not punish Claudius, and these are all the same people, Polonius, Ophelia, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. Hamlet finally comes down on the side of the patriarchal gaze, and not the signifier of the *femme fatale* - for instance, Hamlet only trusts Fortinbras because of how Fortinbras appears - Fortinbras does not have to argue, or risk the signifier, to acquire a kingdom. In the end, the (Nordic) Imaginary dominates the Symbolic.
59. Hamlet works in the same fashion for the lower class, to plot the failure of political protest, in the ending of glorious, Romantic failure and middle-class ascendancy.

The *femme fatale*

60. The *femme fatale* may be defined as the subject who insists on asking the patriarch, ignoring his flesh and his name, why are you talking at all?
61. In contrast, the *femme fatale* may break the law and the transgression may never be known, by anyone. The Lure of the *femme fatale* has no *a priori* link with any Trap. Therefore, the work of identifying the *femme fatale* goes beyond reason, and is more like the work of art. Going beyond reason, that is either changing or forgetting one's mind, is a sign of love. Lacan, citing Rimbaud, says how love is simply "that one is changing one's mind... One changes reasons - in other words, one changes discourses." (Lacan 1999b: 16) Love could be discovered when the position of the father changes to the position of the child, and vice versa. Love is a powerful expression of mobility, although mobility itself is not love. Love is neither the phallic mobility of law-making, nor the feminine mobility or the *jouissance* of the Other (Lacan 1999b: 2-4). A debased version of the switch between father and child positions takes place in Laffan's *Hogan M.P.*, and in Edna O'Brien's fiction. This debased mobility of bourgeois romance is a debased form of love, a parallelism masked as desire, when the exception to the parallel / mirror of romance is the position of the father. Return to footnote 13.
62. Watching the Mousetrap with the *femme fatale* in Claudius' place, her reaction would be contingent on the actors' enunciation of the lines within the Mousetrap play, and *even then*, it would be impossible to be definite about describing her reaction (a Mona Lisa effect).
63. The voice as object, unbounded as it recedes into and comes from silence, or the voice of the *femme fatale*, ignores the approved, bounded silence of Imaginary flesh generated by the patriarchal paternal metaphor in a father-occluded Imaginary.
64. The *femme fatale's* practice of deception is critical to what makes us human, unique as we are in being capable of a special kind of lure which involves a "double deception" from deceiving by pretending to deceive, or telling a truth that one expects to be taken

for a lie. This is the kernel of hysteria: "the hysteric tells the truth in the guise of a lie; the truth of my desire articulates itself in the very distortions of the 'factual accuracy' of my speech." (Žižek 1997)

65. The 'masculine' hero mistakenly conflates the *femme fatale*'s ignorance of the Law with suffering, and consciously effects a rescue mission to *cover over* the unconscious Trap he is setting for her, a Trap in the name-of-the-father (his local law). The Trap is culturally enacted as a phallogocentric rescue mission, and as such, is a basis for colonial discourse, to rescue the native from his barbarity. The Trap is the disingenuous position-as-father.
66. It is not simply talking flesh but the voice as object of the *femme fatale* which rouses an insufferable phallic, possibly maternal *jouissance* in the masculine subject. Faced with the naked voice of the *femme fatale*, the masculine subject is driven to provide his own flesh to cover the voice of the *femme fatale* (like a mother with an infant, hence even the possibility of maternal *jouissance*). Since the *femme fatale* is a naked, ineradicable voice, the masculine (detective) hero will often ultimately provide his own (often dead) flesh, to flesh over her voice. The dead flesh of the detective-masculine hero is his ultimate gamble the *femme fatale* will finally incur enough of a debt, in guilt, to the Law of the Father, and thereby become flesh (the *femme fatale* definitively cannot be married, and *join flesh* with a father figure). The hero's death and dead flesh is a final (utilitarian) attempt to marry (become one flesh) the *femme fatale* to the Law of the Father. In so far as the masculine hero "binds himself for life to the Law, the Symbolic Father is, in so far as he signifies this Law, the dead Father." (Lacan 1999c: 198) Film noir narrative, exposing the *femme fatale* and her deadly voice, puts (cinematic) flesh on her capture in the gaze, providing phallic *jouissance* for the viewer in the end.
67. The *femme fatale* is the Lure not Trapped in the gaze and not trapped in debt, through guilt, with respect to phallic *jouissance*. The Lure is a fantasy not able to be captured in the gaze. The feminine subject is a definite and present absence of which nothing definite or quantifiable may be said - hence feminine *jouissance*, formally, is limitless. Lacan describes this as the hole-in-the-subject, or the "headless subjectification". (Lacan 1998: 184) This headless subject is what I call the *femme fatale*, and when all the flesh as well as head has been removed - I am identifying this as the position of the child.
68. The voice like a vampire cannot be seen in a mirror, but the voice is chained to flesh. Patriarchy chains the feminine to children with its cult of motherhood, and vampires are chained to flesh by their blood lust. The vampire is a hybrid of the father and *femme fatale*, biting into the flesh and bringing the signifier beneath into its mouth, into its voice, via blood. The primordial father and *femme fatale* cannot be seen in the same narrative (Žižek cited Charnes 2003: 33), and this is true, insofar as the father cannot see the *femme fatale* - how the vampire cannot see itself at all still follows the rule.

The Imaginary *femme fatale* or the Cult of Personality

69. In Carleton's *The Black Doctor*, the character of Foster manages to operate as a *femme fatale*, acting as a distressed child, and by doing so, manages to splinter and seed a violent war in the underclass through which murder and mayhem are done on his behalf, and a war which takes place out of his sight. The principle victim is the Jew, Abraham Isaacs. See Chapter 2. The bourgeois *femme fatale* is always a personality cult figure who parades not only the strength of flesh but distress to the flesh. The distress to the flesh is treated like a contagion to the flesh, which must be excised. The flesh placed on the signifier by the Law of the Father has, in other words, been contaminated. This may be dirty, poor children (*Flitters, Tatters and the Counsellor*), or the Jew (anti-Semitism in *The Black Doctor*).
70. "Christianity naturally ended up inventing a God such that he is the one who gets off." (Lacan 1999b: 76) God being the one who gets off and escapes justice and death is like the *femme fatale*, one of the faces of feminine *jouissance*. (Lacan 1999b: 77) The infant Jesus is a unique *femme fatale*, occupying both the Imaginary and Symbolic registers. The Symbolic Infant's voice of God and silent blessing coaxes men and women to death by sacrificial martyrdom (the true nature of the *femme fatale*), to find

the signifier, or Word, beneath the flesh, either with death or mysticism. However, the Infant Jesus, like Helen of Troy, may become moulded as a fallacious *femme fatale* in a father-occluded Imaginary, whose white-face and blue eyes excused colonial ventures of conquest and crusade. The *femme fatale* is an agent of Death, but in the fallacious Imaginary of the Father, an Imaginary *femme fatale* may drive the Imaginary's variety of ultimate conflict, War. Thus, even the *femme fatale* may be co-opted into a father-occluded Imaginary, not as a *femme fatale per se*, but in a cult of personality. See Graziano (1992).

71. The relation between Christianity and fertility is more complex than commonly expressed.

The Christian tradition continued the negative reading of fertility; the female body as the site of reproduction is the sign of sin, for reproduction evokes, if not re-enacts, the initial fall from grace. Even though the first injunction to mankind in Genesis is "Be fruitful, and multiply" (1:28), the favoured females in the Bible (and those given significant narrative time after Eve) have difficulty conceiving (Sarah, Rachel, Hannah, and Elizabeth), circumvent the standard conception process (the Virgin Mary), or are not shown as mothers (Miriam, Deborah, and Ruth).

(Francus 1994: 829)

Allegory and Nationalism

72. Allegory is a means for disordering and almost dissolving one metaphor into the constituent parts of another, not yet decided metaphor, contesting the originary metaphor. The constituent 'castrated' parts of 'metaphorical flesh' are marked, in patriarchy, with a femininity.
73. Nationalism using the guise of allegory becomes a politics of 'the unvoiced' or 'unvoiced' and exploits precisely a counter-Imaginary potential outside the coloniser's rigidified Symbolic in his colonial, father-occluded Imaginary. Allegory's potency is the simplicity of image given in figural devices infiltrating everyday experience. Allegory is a figural device with "an instability of reference and contestation of meaning." (Gibbons 1996: 20). However, what cannot be made clear, is "where the figural ends, and where the literal begins". (Gibbons 1996: 20) In other words, allegory and its openness establish an 'Other', if this 'Other' is often an unstable displaced metaphor for a counter-father position yet to be resolved, by history alone in the end.
74. The compensatory *voiced* allegorisation of Irish nationalism was in music, especially Gaelic-inflected Romanticism. See White (1988: 151-159) for a discussion of the influence of music and lyricism on the Irish literary imagination for Synge, Joyce and Yeats. Deane has argued for the proximity of nineteenth century Irish music and literature. (Deane 1991: 4-5)
75. Gibbons traces the potency of allegory in its feminine form as positing an alternative 'feminised' public sphere (imagined as the nation), against the official patriarchal order of the state. After relating how Edward Hayes noted the recourse to allegory under colonisation in the nineteenth century, Gibbons notes further, by figuring in 'herself' the actual process of history required for a nationalist project, in its open ambition and instability of reference, a symbol of 'Woman' situates very well an allegory traversing "textual grounds alone", so the public reader must "go 'outside the text,' to its *historical conditions of meaning*, in order to give full scope to its semantic potential." (Gibbons 1996: 21)
76. Yet allegory might be a monotonous metonymy staying imaginatively close to the Imaginary, and even the father-occluded Imaginary of the coloniser, such as Catholic nationalism and the Marion cult, in lieu of the colonial cult of Victoria, performing all the same functions and maintaining all the same structures of authority around a displaced native position of the father, in a native, father-occluded Imaginary.

Yeats, Joyce and Beckett

77. Hysterical subjects "try to come to terms with symbolic castration (the loss of enjoyment) by arousing and sustaining the desire of the Other. In a sense, hysterics derive satisfaction from making themselves desirable, but not enjoyable." (Nobus 2000: 43-44) Mary Bruin escaping with *The Child* is one example of someone who is desirable but will not be enjoyed, and the Yeats - seeking to arouse and sustain the desire of Maud Gonne and Ireland as Caithleen ni Houlihan - is a hysteric of Irish literature. Yeats enjoyed to prolong Purgatory.
78. Joyce took the master's (English) signifiers as the animated images of his art and then reassembled the master's language. Joyce trumped the coloniser's mastery with his own hyperbolic trail of Joycean being-memory over language. Joyce is the great 'master' of Irish literature in the lower right of Figure 3, moving left so that the signifier itself becomes an animated image. Joyce, Shakespeare and Hamlet are magnificent 'punk slugs' of literature who have left their raucous trails over the English language. Joyce is the agonised master of Purgatory.
79. Beckett's *Trilogy* is a virtuoso rendition of an upper right aesthetic where Beckett refrains from mastery, nostalgia, and memory in an anti-colonial dissolution of memory itself in the Beckettian grey, where any emotion can have any name. Beckett's art is the question not of who the unnamable is, but what can the unnamable want? "Analytic discourse introduces an adjective made into a noun." (Lacan 1999b: 21) *The Unnamable* steers close to the discourse of the analyst, obviously so by such a title, but also with *objet a* in the position of agent, or narrator. (Lacan 1999b: 16-17) Beckett is the great 'analyst' of modern Irish literature. With Beckett and Purgatory, you never can be too sure.



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